FIRST THINGS

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Avery Cardinal Dulles

World Order: What Catholics Forgot George Weigel

How Richard Rorty Found Religion Jason Boffetti

Louis Bolce & Gerald De Maio *on the widening religion gap*

Peter J. Leithart *on the theological uses of rhetoric*

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BOOKS: *Robert Louis Wilken* • *Alan Mittleman*
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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

Richard John Neuhaus

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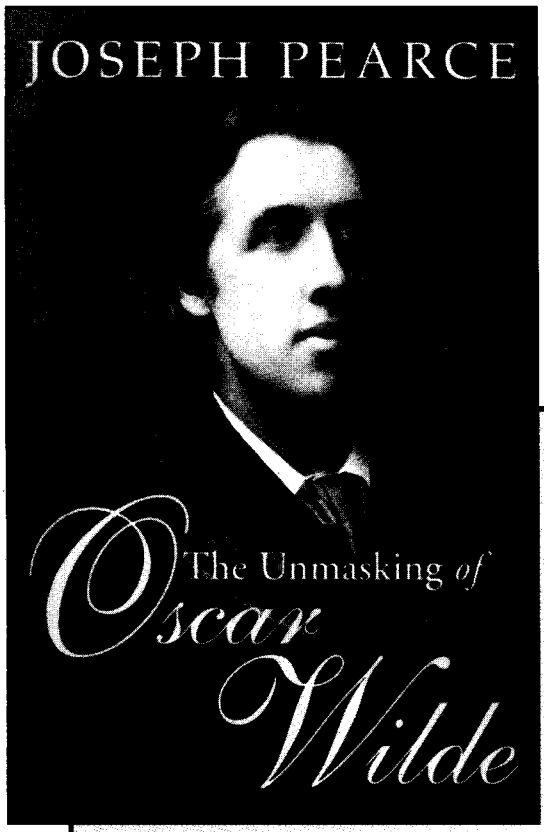

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Europe's Problem—or Ours?

George Weigel's provocative article, "Europe's Problem—and Ours" (February) was interesting to me for two reasons. First, in the late 1950s, I served as Christopher Dawson's teaching assistant in the Harvard Divinity School, where he held the Stillman Chair in Roman Catholic Studies. He taught me about the importance of culture, a lesson I've never forgotten. Mr. Weigel very nicely captures Dawson's thought. Second, my work in bioethics has brought me to Eastern Europe (particularly the Czech Republic) for close to fifteen years, so I have seen with my own eyes much of what Mr. Weigel describes.

Yet I do wish that Mr. Weigel had a greater sense of the mystery, even perversity, of history, both Europe's and our own. Let me begin with his question and lament: "Why is Europe committing demographic suicide?" Demographically speaking, it is not just Europe that is doing so, but every developed country. The United States has a birthrate of 2.1 children per woman, just at the replacement level. But demographers attribute that high figure to the impact of immigrants, who have much higher birthrates than those already here. If those newcomers are left out, the U.S. is committing demographic suicide along with everyone else. But it is to our credit that we take immigrants in a generous way, and they may keep us going.

Catholics—and those who believe in the power of underlying cultures—might well be disturbed by the fact that the European countries with the lowest birthrates are historically Catholic. Spain and Italy have birthrates of 1.2, next to the very bottom in Europe, followed closely by the Slovak Republic and Poland (both at 1.3). By contrast, some of the most "secular" countries do much better (at least comparatively): Great Britain, 1.6; France, 1.9; and Sweden, 1.5. Most provocatively, three of the most secular European countries—Denmark, France, and Norway—are among the few that have actually reversed the fertility decline over the past twenty years.

I cannot provide any full explanation of what all of this means, but my own guess is that secularization has little to do with it. The fact is that children have a different meaning in advanced technological societies (where they are costly and harder to raise) than in earlier agricultural societies (where children were necessary for family survival and childhood mortality rates were high). I know many devout, conservative Catholic families, but it is rare to find many that have more than two children.

A word about the Czech Republic. That country has the lowest birthrate in Europe, 1.1. I have asked my friends there to explain why. I've received no good answers beyond a vague complaint about the economic burden of children. The Czech Republic has moved in just over a decade from communism to a full-hearted embrace of the market. The fact that the Czech Republic also has the highest number of average working hours a year no doubt makes a difference as well (1,980, in contrast to 1,815 in the U.S. and 1,581 in Sweden). Women are expected to work a long day outside the home and then at night to become mother, wife, cook, laundress, and house cleaner. In those circumstances even one child can seem a heavy burden.

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For all the faults that Mr. Weigel perceives in Europe, is it such a bad thing that those secularized Europeans have held fast to the old Catholic value of solidarity, guaranteeing good health care and welfare programs to every citizen based simply on their human dignity (even when it hurts their market competitiveness)? Or that murder and divorce rates are radically lower throughout the continent than in the more religious U.S.? Or that the Czechs, for all of their problems, seem to me to do a better job of raising their children than we do, and maintaining much stronger family cohesiveness and intergenerational bonds?

A final, speculative question: What exactly is the relationship between America's world-class religiosity and its international power? It was Tocqueville who noted that Americans were obsessed in the early nineteenth century with religion and money. That seems still true. But Tocqueville did not say that America's success or strength as a nation could be traced to its religiosity. Nor did Christopher Dawson, so far as I can recall. Could it not be that it is our love of money that explains our national strength, and that our religiosity is just a gloss on our materialism?

Even Christopher Dawson, nostalgic to the core, would have conceded that many, if not most, of the historically strong religious cultures were monarchical, antidemocratic, and repressive of just about anything we would now take to be essential to human rights and dignity. Need we be surprised that they came to have a bad name? And can we be edified by the fact that some Islamic countries are the only ones still hanging on to a strong religious culture, at whatever the human cost? The old cultural role models are dead and gone and the contemporary ones are not fit for emulation. I don't think Dawson ever saw a way out of this problem, and I don't think Mr. Weigel has seen one either.

Daniel Callahan
Director of International Programs
The Hastings Center
Garrison, New York

George Weigel's article brought to light an important historical reality. He noted that fully explaining European hostility to its Catholic Christian heritage would "require a careful probing of the Catholic Church's identification with those political forces most resistant to the democratic project in late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe." Mr. Weigel is right that the choices made by the Catholic Church deserve examination—specifically, the close collaboration of the Church with Catholic rulers who attempted to quell the development of parliamentary governance. Yet the Church's (tacit) advocacy of bloodshed instead of debate, oppression instead of freedom, began long before the late eighteenth century.

I hope that Mr. Weigel will support (or better, conduct) a thorough examination of how it was that the Catholic Church identified with such fierce resistance to the democratic project. One wonders, also, what the God of heaven and earth might be up to when a Catholic scholar of Mr. Weigel's stature hopes for something like a Great Awakening, "a rebirth of life-transforming and culture-forming Christian conviction, especially Catholic conviction." Perhaps "birth," instead of "rebirth," should be the term correctly applied to the Catholic conviction regarding "the democratic project." Mr. Weigel is right, however, to hope for the Holy Spirit to move Europe as a whole toward Christ, because the likely alternatives look to be bloody.

W. T. Hinds
Maysville, Georgia

George Weigel traces Western Europe's "exclusive secularism" to a "different experience" than ours during the last century, thereby posing a threat to democracy everywhere.

I believe that Mr. Weigel misses the larger point. There is also an American problem. I believe the American problem and the European problem reinforce and feed off each other, and are part of a larger problem of religious apathy that marks the sophisticated scientific and technological societies that developed in the United States and Western Europe during the last century. Expressed as "exclusive secularism" in the open European revolt against God, the problem is also expressed in "business as usual" American indifference to the importance of God and God's wisdom in the development of foreign policy.

Mr. Weigel ends his piece by writing that "these difficult first years of the twenty-first century have taught us the importance of reading world politics in new ways." But I believe his article argues in old ways. Can we expect, for example, that American embassies in Europe, in the exercise of public diplomacy, can ever be up to the task of systematically engaging in a war of ideas with "the European media, European universities and research institutes, and European voluntary organizations—all those places where European opinion is molded?" American embassies have thus far failed in the task, according to Mr. Weigel, but does that failure surprise him?

Mr. Weigel writes that Europe needs "a rebirth of life-transforming and culture-forming Christian conviction, especially Catholic conviction." Perhaps his "trans-Atlantic initiatives" would be served by challenging the Catholic Church in Europe and America to organize colleges, universities, distinguished faculty, and qualified members of the laity in the launching of a gener-

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ously funded intellectual and spiritual offensive against misguided atheism in the United States and Western Europe.

As a lifelong Catholic, I have discovered over the years many ways to characterize the indispensability of God's wisdom in human affairs, among them the use of language and metaphors with which atheists can identify. I believe that success in this war of ideas begins with such language and metaphors.

Robert Kelleher
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry at reading George Weigel's old fashioned integrist Catholic explanation for what has gone wrong with Europe. Of course it is that Europe has abandoned the faith of its fathers! And the only place in Europe where the faith still matters is the Slavic East, especially Poland.

This not only sounds like Catholic propaganda of the Christopher Dawson variety; it is also Polish propaganda. The alleged understanding of Poles that culture and faith mean more than politics and power is absurd. Poland was not liberated from Nazi domination by faith and culture; it was liberated by Bolshevik troops. Slavic spirituality has always been an excuse for backwardness and a justification for savagery.

Ever since Joseph de Maistre and Pius IX, Europeans have been told that all would be well if they would just return to the faith of their fathers. Arrogant nonsense.

Norman Ravitch
Emeritus Professor of History
University of California, Riverside

To be persuaded by George Weigel's argument one must first buy into the idea that Europe is having a "civilizational morale crisis," as he puts it. He doesn't give any evidence of such a crisis. If anything, Europe seems to be evolving beyond its aggressive, colonial tendencies of the past into a more socially and economically progressive entity that relies less and less on the nation-state. It is the United States that continues to become more spiritually, morally, and economically bankrupt, even though religion outwardly plays a larger role in our society than in much of Europe.

Mr. Weigel suggests that we should assume that Europe is in crisis because 80 to 90 percent of its population was and is strongly opposed to the war in Iraq. What this opposition proves is that the population of Europe has a strong sense of morality and justice; aggressive military action against the people of another nation that has not attacked yours is immoral and unjust. The Bush administration's transparent and ever-shifting reasons for invading Iraq are now unraveling. It is becoming more and more evident that this administration was determined to invade Iraq from its beginning and was searching for any pretext to do so. This reminds one of how Hitler was fixated on invading Poland and felt he didn't need any credible justification.

Mr. Weigel claims that "history is driven, over the long haul, by culture—by what men and women honor, cherish, and worship; by what societies deem to be true and good, and by the expressions they give to those convictions." If this is true then America is the society that is in trouble, not Europe. Look at our TV-fed, mall-driven, materialistic, Hollywood-defined culture. Look at what Americans honor and cherish and worship: their cars, their clothes, their things. It doesn't show a high level of spiritual or moral sophistication to be outraged by the exposure of Janet Jackson's breast. Where is the moral outrage at the killing and maiming of thousands of men, women, and children in Iraq in a "preemptive" war to destroy weapons of mass destruction that didn't exist? What good does it do to believe in God or to go to church if you don't stand up against moral injustices like these?

John Gromada
Nyack, New York

George Weigel's learned article is full of foreboding for the future of Europe, which he believes is threatened by the rise of atheistic humanism and an influx of Muslim immigrants. But what he really objects to is Europe's failure to follow the Bush administration's lead on any number of foreign policy issues, and Europe's preference for using soft power in conflict resolution rather than military hard power.

For that I do not fault the Europeans, who can forget neither the carnage of World War I nor the devastation of so many of their great cities in World War II. Americans, with the exception of the South in our Civil War, have never experienced such devastation.

Mr. Weigel makes much of what he sees as atheistic humanism in Europe, and he calls for a revitalization of Europe's Christian roots. But I would remind him that many of Europe's longest and bloodiest wars were fought over religion—when the contenders on both sides were Christian.

Mr. Weigel's fears of the "tides of immigration from North Africa, Turkey, and other parts of the Islamic world" to Europe reminds me of American fears over the waves of unwashed immigrants from Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean to our shores at the close of the nineteenth century. They brought changes to the United States, but they also revitalized our society with their energies and talents, as do our more recent Hispanic immigrants today.

Just as Judaism gave birth to Christianity, and both of them to Islam, it is entirely possible that the new meeting of Islam and Europe

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will result in a stronger and more vigorous Europe and will mitigate the European "problem" that Mr. Weigel so gloomily predicts.

Yale Richmond
Washington, D.C.

George Weigel replies:

"Europe's Problem—and Ours" was a kind of reconnaissance mission, probing whether a different way of reading history might shed some light on Europe's past as well as on its present circumstances (and ours). I certainly don't pretend to have all the answers to what seems, to more than a few Europeans, to be their current crisis. But as the conventional political explanations of the situation seemed unsatisfactory, I thought it useful to widen the analytical lens a bit by taking the cultural roots of history more seriously than academic historians typically do. So I welcome a robust debate about what I found in the course of my reconnaissance, in the conviction that that kind of debate yields more fruitful intelligence.

Daniel Callahan's thoughtful letter raises questions that I continue to ponder myself, including the question of why the Catholic Church has so strikingly failed to teach so many of its people that children are to be welcomed as a gift rather than considered primarily as an economic burden. Mr. Callahan is surely right that dramatic changes in European society and the European economy over the past several hundred years bear on the question of Europe's dramatically changed family structures and its catastrophically low birth rates. But I am surprised that a former colleague of Christopher Dawson should so easily dismiss the emergence of an "exclusivist secularism" as one part of the causal mix. If ideas have consequences, then the flattening of the horizon of human possibility and responsibility that exclusivist secularism inculcates surely has something to do with a continent-wide failure to create the human future in the most elemental sense. As for finding a way out of this problem, let me suggest that Mr. Callahan take (another?) look at Pope John Paul II's 2003 apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, which might provide a starting point for a useful discussion.

I trust that W. T. Hinds will permit the suggestion that he have a look at Christopher Dawson on the Christian roots of the public culture that eventually gave birth to European democracy. The story of the Catholic Church's resistance to certain forms of European democracy in the early modern period is reasonably well known. What is less well known is the story of the persecution of the Church by emerging European democracies, which continued (in the case of France) into the early twentieth century. And what has been largely forgotten is what the Catholic Church taught European man over a millennium of history: that the sovereignty of God qualifies all worldly sovereignties; that consent is crucial to just governance; that there is an inherent sense of justice in the people; and that states are accountable to moral truths that transcend them. These ideas (all of which are under pressure in twenty-first-century Europe) were crucial in the emergence of free societies in Europe, irrespective of the role played by the early modern popes. We'll not get to the historical roots of Europe's current malaise by reading the past through the cracked lenses of the Whig theory of history.

Robert Kelleher and I are agreed that, as the title of my article indicated, Europe's problem is also ours, if in a different form.

As for Norman Ravitch, it's sad to think that a history professor is so ignorant of the roots of the revolution of 1989 in east-central Europe. Were he minimally familiar with that dramatic story, he would not, I hope, indulge himself quite so freely in hoary ethnic and religious stereotyping of the sort that identifies Slavic spirituality exclusively with "backwardness and a justification for savagery."

It would be interesting to put John Gromada in contact with the numerous Europeans who have thanked me for my description of their situation and my diagnosis of its cultural roots. These colleagues are quite persuaded that Western Europe is suffering through a crisis of civilizational morale, and that the sources of the crisis are to be found in culture. I have no case to make for the junk that American popular culture often exports abroad; but if Mr. Gromada would watch German television for a few nights, I think he'd find that things are just as bad in Europe as they are in the United States, and arguably worse. I don't know where Mr. Gromada learned about the "killing and maiming of thousands of men, women, and children" in Iraq by U.S. forces; but while he is seeking more accurate information about the remarkably light civilian casualties in March and April 2003—a direct result of the way in which the United States chose to wage war—he might contemplate the tens of thousands of Iraqi corpses that have been unearthed from mass graves since the Saddam Hussein regime (which put those people in those graves) fell. Then he might, I hope, think again about the meaning of "moral injustice."

I don't quite know how Yale Richmond knows what I "really" object to about the current state of Europe, but it rather strains credulity to suggest, as he seems to do, that French, German, and Russian objections to U.S. policy in Iraq had to do with a more refined moral sensibility. As for the old canard that Europe's bloodiest wars were the wars of religion, no serious student of the carnage of the twentieth century can credit that. The European wars of re-

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ligion were a disgrace; to compare them in lethality with the First and Second World Wars is, quite literally, incredible.

None of my correspondents could have anticipated the events of mid-March in Spain, in which the electorate seemed to truckle to terrorist blackmail by voting out the party of former Prime Minister José María Aznar, which had supported the U.S. position on Iraq. Such appeasement strikes me as a perfect, and chilling, example of precisely what I meant in my essay by a "crisis of civilizational morale."

Religion and Parental Rights

In his article, "The Enemies of Religious Liberty" (February), James Hitchcock may have misinterpreted the essence of the dissenting opinion of Justice William O. Douglas in *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972).

Justice Douglas did *not* give carte blanche approval to the right of *all* children under *all* circumstances to disagree with, and to defy, the religious guidance of their parents. He proposed this formula: "Where the child is mature enough to express potentially conflicting desires, it would be an invasion of the child's rights to permit such an imposition without canvassing his views." The Court's opinion expressly disclaimed any intention to rule on the issue of a child's right to pursue his or her own religious orientation.

I note the failure by Professor Hitchcock to present supporting citations for his attribution to Justice Douglas of the view that "90 percent of people were not even fit to be parents." Prof. Hitchcock also failed to present any citations of statutes or of judicial precedents to support his claim that, for Justice Douglas, it is "an open question whether parents possess the right to raise their children in a particular religion." I submit that it is well-established law that parents possess a nearly absolute right to imbue their children with the doctrines and practices of their religion.

Benjamin D. Sherman
Saddle Brook, New Jersey

James Hitchcock replies:
In the *Yoder* case, Chief Justice Warren E. Burger and Justice Byron D. White, both of whom wrote majority opinions, agreed that if Amish children wanted to attend a public high school contrary to their parents' wishes, the children's desires were relevant. The justices noted, however, that the state of Wisconsin presented no evidence of such a desire on the part of the children. Thus Justice Douglas' dissent was based on an unproven supposition.

In his dissent Justice Douglas did not merely hold that if adolescent children expressed a desire to pursue opportunities in the larger world they had a right to do so, but also that the state had an obligation to insure that such a possibility was not foreclosed: "If a parent keeps his child out of school beyond the grade school, then the child will be forever barred from an entry into the new and amazing world of diversity that we have today," a principle which seems to require that Amish children be made to attend high school even if they do not wish to, since at some future time they might change their minds.

As Chief Justice Burger noted, academic experts on the Amish way of life, whose testimony was not contradicted in court, thought that to send Amish children to a public high school would undermine their way of life. This was apparently irrelevant to Justice Douglas, who was thoroughly convinced that "religion is an individual experience." This is precisely the issue in much present-day discussion of religion in society. Such a definition virtually excludes religion from any significant social influence.

Justice Douglas' claim that 90 percent of people are unfit to be parents can be found in his book *Go East Young Man*.

Thicker Than Blood

Reading Noah Millman's "True Fictions of Fatherhood" (February) inspired some serious thinking about my own family. Telling my younger brother that he was adopted had the power to hurt him when we were growing up (and later on to amuse him) only because we both accepted, as Mr. Millman does, that "there is no more essential tie than that of blood." But working in the blood-centered culture of Latin America has given me a different idea of blood. Latin American men will almost never adopt a child outside of their extended family. And they are greatly suspicious of other men who do. The tragedy is that almost half a million children die in Latin America every year under the age of five, while the number of adoptions is minuscule.

I now have a deeper understanding of my Christian heritage. By being baptized into Christ and receiving his body and blood in the Eucharist, it no longer matters what our biological blood is, because we are actual or potential brothers and sisters through the blood of Christ.

Kenneth Plotnik
Director
Saint Anne Adoption Centre
Stratford, Ontario

Noah Millman replies:
I can't disagree that true civilization depends on the extension of trust beyond the bounds of family and clan. Nonetheless, I note that Kenneth Plotnik does not look to the state to establish his blood-brotherhood with all humanity but to the actions of his God. That is, I think, entirely fitting, and entirely in keeping with the spirit of my own piece.

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Irreconcilable Revelations

The Monotheists by F. E. Peters and Edward T. Oakes' review of it (February) unfortunately affirm the thesis that "no revelation can trump another, for to do so would be to step outside the circle of the elect recipients of that revelation, exactly what revelation forbids." What happened to truth?

Fortunately, thousands of Jews risked being outcast by converting to Christianity at the Pentecost, while many others have done so ever since. They experienced first- or second-hand the reality of the person of Jesus Christ, God's supreme revelation to humanity. It was not one man's dream in a cave. The story of Jesus comes through many authors who were with him or knew people who were. The witnesses to Jesus include the martyrs who knew him. Nobody gives up his life for someone he knows is a fraud.

Jesus is a person who not only taught in front of thousands, but showed the world how to live. His teachings of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son are revered by many in all three religions. He was not just compassionate but, as Thomas Cahill says, "he was compassion." His miracles were never for self-aggrandizement but for the sake of others. His wisdom is astounding as he parries the priests and Sadducees. In contrast, Mohammed never claimed to perform a miracle, was married over ten times, and led an army.

In a word, faith that is not grounded in objective reality is a dream.

Willam J. Downey
Manhasset, New York

Edward T. Oakes replies:
William J. Downey apparently thinks that when I say "No revelation can trump another," I have thereby lapsed into postmodern relativism. But my point was a formal one: If someone is first convinced that one particular revelation is true and then converts to a different monotheistic religion, he is doing precisely what his original revelation forbids. That happens, of course—St. Paul being perhaps the most famous example. But Paul converted to Christ not because he surveyed the claims of the early Christian community in Jerusalem over against the claims of a nascent rabbinic Judaism but because he was vouchsafed a further revelation. Nor does the presence of martyrs in the Christian churches afford the clinching answer, for Jewish rabbis have been martyred throughout history with the confession "God is One" on their lips, and Shiite Muslims make a veritable cult of martyrdom, to an extreme that makes Mel Gibson look anodyne. I must stress, however, that these points, easily verified by history (and F. E. Peters' book is entirely phenomenological in approach), do not concede the standard relativistic and typically American conclusion that "it's all the same God anyway." Blaise Pascal could offer a most vigorous defense of Christianity over against both Judaism and Islam, but he was never so naïve as to think that mere rational argument or ethical comparison would do the trick.

Community and the University

Eric Miller makes some important points in "Alone in the Academy" (February), his MacIntyre-inspired lament about the modern university. Among the most important points is that a university which elevates a deracinated liberalism to the status of doctrine will be unable to provide anything that could justly be called a liberal education.

However, I would quarrel with his claim that such liberalism is expressive of an essentially jaded and socially dispirited institution. What he calls the "dominant liberal standpoint" of the university seems to me to be rather one instance of the communitarian purpose he wishes it to have. Mr. Miller's liberal opponents agree with him, I think, that the universities ought to provide a collective moral goal; they disagree about the content of that goal.

To be sure, Mr. Miller does write eloquently of the need for openness and wonder in a university education. But a harmony or synthesis of communitarian purpose and theoretical openness is what many of his liberal counterparts are after, too, and what they have failed repeatedly to deliver. That they adopt a more cynical pose nowadays is only to be expected.

A more modest yet potentially more invigorating hope might be that our universities strive, not to edify or regenerate the community, but to educate the people (or some or many of the people) who compose it. Among other things, this would allow us to draw back from anxious talk about "the university" and its social purpose and speak in a less fraught way about the various colleges and universities and their various educational programs. On what other terms could a Christian university thrive today?

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Eric Miller's replies:
Andrew J. Bove assumes a distinction between "education" and "edifying a community" that, if applied, would actually diminish each. How can community-building be achieved absent a common educational vision and experience for its members? And how can education, in its fullest sense, take place, if it is not in service to the larger community of which the institution is a part? That the "university" may now be unable to fulfill these ends is precisely the point. What we need,

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in short, is not the diminishment of our aspirations for universities but rather universities better constituted to fulfill them.

An Appreciation

I have just read with respect and regret "Last Time" by James Nuechterlein (February). I suppose I could be described as a mostly left-of-center Catholic, albeit imperfectly left and imperfectly Catholic. I have a craving for discussion of the topics that have occupied this publication for the years of Mr. Nuechterlein's service. Almost without exception, I have found grist for examining and challenging my presuppositions in a reasoned way. For those of us for whom the important questions matter, Mr. Nuechterlein's efforts at answers, and his editorial care with the answers offered by others, were always enlightening, even when they did not produce agreement. Thanks for the witness, as well as for your example of careful thinking.

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Loyola University of Chicago

Many Gods?

In February's "While We're At It," Richard John Neuhaus argued that Muslims worship the same God that Christians worship, although Muslims identify God as Allah. This conclusion would not seem to agree with a review of the relevant portions of the Koran.

A review of the Koran shows that Allah has attributes inconsistent with the Christian God. To summarize, Allah has no son, Allah is not a member of the Trinity, and Allah is not Jesus. These three conclusions contradict the nature of God revealed in Scripture. Where does that leave us? We have two possible options. Either Allah—as defined by the Koran—is not God or the Bible misrepresents God. The latter position seems untenable, given that the Bible is the inspired word of God and God cannot lie.

If we edit out the offensive passages from the Koran in an effort to make Allah consistent with God, then we would seem to be guilty of arrogance in claiming that we understand Islam better than Muslims. Moreover, we would fall into the same relativistic error that FIRST THINGS so has ably noted about certain portions of the Church in America today. In that case, we would be changing foundational documents and doctrines to meet the fashions of the moment. Finally, even if we could disregard the Koran, we are still left with the difficult problem of convincing Muslims that they have misunderstood Islam—and Allah—for the past 1,400 years.

Disrgarding these passages also requires that we not take Islam—as defined by the Koran—seriously. If we wish to understand Islam, then we should note the core claims made in Islam. A failure to note and appreciate these claims risks serious misperceptions about the nature of Islam and Allah.

As Christians, we may not know what Allah is or even if he exists, but we can know that he is not God.

Matthew Payne
Herndon, Virginia

RJN replies:
Again, there is only one God. The Arabic word for God is Allah. Arabic Christians, as well as Muslims, pray to Allah. Christians believe that Muslims are profoundly wrong in their understanding of the one God (or Allah) to whom we both pray. And yes, it is a difficult but inescapable challenge to convince Muslims that they misunderstand the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jesus, and Mohammed. As some scholars contend, Islam may best be understood as a Christian heresy, and was so understood by many Christians in the seventh and eighth centuries. But that is a story for another time.

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Opinion

The Politics of Partisan Neutrality

Louis Bolce and Gerald De Maio

Americans who want to understand conflicts between Democrats and Republicans during the election season have received precious little help from the media. While reporters usually recognize that there is some sort of problem about "values" and about "faith-based" principles, and that the Democrats and Republicans are often on opposite sides, writers and editors tend to publish news and analysis as if the situation were as follows: The Christian right, having infiltrated the Republican Party, is importing its divisive religious ideas into our public life, whereas the Democratic Party is the neutral camp of tolerant and pluralistic Americans.

This way of framing the matter predominates, not only because it reflects the personal beliefs of many journalists, but also because it draws upon a long American tradition of suspicion and fear of committed Catholics and evangelical Protestants. (In the elite newspapers and magazines, the number of journalists in either of those groups is tiny.) It is thus comfortable for journalists to conceive of religiously based political conflict in terms of an aggressive Christian right advancing upon a beleaguered neutral and pluralistic center and left.

What the journalists leave out of their accounts is the fact that the nonreligious have also become aggressive actors on the political stage and that they possess and promote, in fact, an overarching religious worldview of their own—one that can fairly be called secularism.

This point is strongly supported from the results of our analysis (using the Lexis-Nexis database) of how the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Washington Post* wrote about the culture wars between 1990 and 2000. Over this ten-year period, these three newspapers published just eighteen articles linking the culture wars to the secularist-religious cleavage dividing the Democratic and Republican parties. During this same time span, however, these papers published 929 news stories about the political machinations of evangelical and fundamentalist Christians, while doing only fifty-nine stories about the pivotal role played by secularists in these conflicts. The press did not overlook the culture wars, just the involvement of secularists in them.

If the themes conveyed in headlines and magazine cover stories of the past several months—"The Religion Gap," "The God Gulf," "Howard Dean's Religion Problem," and so on—are indicative of the press' current take on the religious issue, then media elites appear to have been awakened, if only momentarily, to the secularist factor in American politics. Between mid-September 2003, around the time of the first Democratic presidential candidate debate in the 2004 primary and caucus season, and mid-February, the time of this writing, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* published twelve news stories conveying to their readers that the Democratic and Republican parties were split along a secularist-religious divide. As a comparison, consider that these two newspapers published just two articles about the religious divide during the entire 2000 presidential election season. An interesting fact, which publishers of such religion-gap articles would do well to recall, is that when cultural conflict is framed as a clash between Democratic secularist values and Republican traditionalist ones, the Democrats suffer more in the people's estimation than do the Republicans, particularly in the South and Midwest. American National Election Survey (ANES) data and Pew Research Center polls support this point: more than twice as many respondents in these surveys felt antagonistic toward "nonbelievers" as toward the "Christian right"; these same polls also showed that the positions favored by nonreligious respondents on gay marriage, vouchers, partial-birth abortion, and school prayer are opposed by majorities of religious moderates and traditionalists—opposed, that is, by the majority of the American people.

The association of the Democratic Party with secularism, according to press accounts from the current electoral cycle, is a relatively recent development that is largely attributable to the person of Howard Dean—with his arrogant style, his Northeastern elitism, and his indifference to the religious sensibilities of middle America. Presumably, with Dean out of the picture, the secularist faction of the Democratic Party has also been removed. But this analysis is, at best, incomplete.

A quarter of a century of political science research and public opinion surveys point up that the prominence of secularists in the Democratic Party these days is not unique to the Howard Dean insurgency nor new in the 2004 election cycle. Dean's religion problem was emblematic of the wider "God Gulf" that has separated the core of the Republican and Democratic parties

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over the past several decades. Secularists are not outsiders fighting to gain a foothold in the Democratic Party; they are the regnant wing of the Democratic Party, and have been so for over three decades. Jeane Kirkpatrick's 1976 study of *The New Presidential Elite* and Geoffrey Layman's 2001 analysis of national party convention delegates, activists, and platforms for the years 1972 to 1996 in *The Great Divide*, trace the religion gap to the "new politics" of the 1972 Democratic convention. According to the 1972-1992 Convention Delegate Surveys, secularists (that is, atheists, agnostics, religious "nones," the unchurched, and assorted self-identified irreligionists—most of whom were McGovern supporters) constituted the largest "religious" bloc among Democratic delegates. Their substantial presence at this convention, combined with their zeal and cohesion, overwhelmed the culturally traditionalist (southern Evangelical and white ethnic Catholic) wings of the party, which in the past could be counted on to temper secularist policy initiatives. It was at the contentious Miami convention of 1972 that secularists first became an important political force within a major party.

The ascendancy of secularists in the Democratic Party had long-term consequences for the relative attractiveness of each party for members of different religious groups. The Democratic Party became more appealing to secularists and less hospitable to traditionalists. Party stalwarts, many of whom were Catholic (for instance, Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago and congressmen such as New York Representatives John Rooney and James Delaney) eventually found themselves isolated and their influence waning. Representatives and senators from the party's more conservative southern wing found the cultural liberalism of the national party ever more distasteful and more difficult to explain to their constituents. Many withdrew from active participation in national Democratic Party gatherings, and some bolted to the Republican Party. Without the moderating influence of cultural traditionalists, the party became visibly more secularist, as reflected in its national platform planks and the roll-call voting behavior of its congressmen and senators. (The difference between these two Democratic parties is personified by Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, who has traveled far down the secularist road from his father's cultural conservatism.)

The triumph of secularism in the Democratic Party had the opposite effect on the GOP. By the first Clinton election, divisions among party elites spilled into the electorate and were so apparent in exit poll and public opinion data that one team of well-known academic researchers identified 1992 alternatively as the "Year of the Evangelical" and the "Year of the Secular." The vote distribution of white respondents who indicated that they backed a major party candidate in the 1992 ANES data support this assertion. Clinton carried three-fourths of the secularist vote, while George H. W. Bush won two-thirds of the traditionalists. This polarized voting pattern continued through the 2002 congressional elections.

Since the 1992 election the religion gap has been more significant than all other divisions in the electorate, with the sole exception of the racial divide. Though much has been made of the gender gap in political commentary over the past decade, the difference in the voting preferences of men and women is far narrower than the one that separates the political orientations of the religious from the nonreligious. White women, for example, were eight percent less likely than white men to support Bush in the 2000 election, but white secularists were 42 percent less likely to back Bush over Gore than were traditionalists.

The degree to which one is religious or secular reflects a larger mindset that includes a moral outlook, a political ideology, a distinct set of attitudes toward cultural and church-state issues, and a political identity. Answers to a battery of questions included in ANES and Pew surveys indicate that the secularist moral perspective (humanistic relativism), ideological outlook (liberalism), political identity (Democrat), and stance toward the contentious values issues of secularists are just as neatly packaged and identifiable as those of traditionalists. According to ANES and Pew survey data, for example, more than seven out of ten secularists felt that the influence of religion in politics is divisive; over three-quarters opposed laws restricting abortion; two-thirds backed gay marriage; three-fifths agreed that "we should adjust our views of right and wrong to changing moral standards"; over half were against school vouchers; and a third felt antagonistic toward Catholics, while two-thirds expressed antipathy toward Evangelicals. By at least equal margins, religious traditionalists took opposite views on these matters.

Secularists and traditionalists each expect their political representatives to take their side on such issues, particularly when casting roll-call votes in the House and Senate. And indeed, congressional Democrats can be counted on as reliable supporters of the secularist cultural agenda. The core opposition to school vouchers, faith-based charities, the Defense of Marriage Act, and the banning of partial-birth abortion is overwhelmingly on the Democratic side of the aisle. On each of these issues, congressional Democrats who self-identify as

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"Catholics" voted no differently from other Democrats: they affirmed secularist values over traditionally religious ones. (Catholic Republicans in the House and the Senate, in contrast, lopsidedly supported traditionalist values in opposition to secularist ones.)

Take the case of the voucher bill that authorized federal funding for a school-choice program for low-income families in the District of Columbia. The school choice bill arrived on the floor of the House after the historic *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* decision (2002) in which the Supreme Court affirmed the right of low-income parents to use publicly funded education vouchers to send their children to religious schools. Only three of the 195 Democrats voting in the House supported the bill, and of these two were Catholics—Walter Lipinski, who represents one of the last white ethnic Catholic enclaves in Chicago, and Gene Taylor, the Mississippi congressman from Trent Lott's former district. Sixty-three Catholic Democratic House members voted against this voucher bill. (In contrast, forty-six out of fifty-one Catholic Republican House members supported it.)

Of course, it is likely that the party's commitment to secularist values was not the only factor that motivated Democrats to oppose vouchers. Opposition by teachers' unions, no doubt, was influential. Still, it is difficult to imagine that the Democratic Party's historic relationship with unions, or the power of the education lobby, explains the line-up of Democratic roll-call votes on bills concerning partial-birth abortion, parental notification, gays in the Boy Scouts, or other congressional action pitting secularist values against traditionalist ones. A better explanation is the Democratic Party's commitment to secularist values. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the late Democratic senator from New York and an elder statesman of the party who had a consistent pro-abortion record, offered Catholic Democratic senators a perfectly sensible rationale for moving away from the secularist position on partial-birth abortion. While in the Senate, Moynihan branded this procedure a form of infanticide and voted to ban it. But even on a vote that would have conformed to the Catholic Church's teaching and to the judgment of a substantial majority of the American people—and with political cover provided by Moynihan—still nine out of fourteen Catholic Democratic senators registered votes that reflect the secularist worldview.

John Kerry, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, exemplifies very well the secularist direction of the Democratic Party. We created a ten-point secularism (or antitraditionalism) scale from *National Journal's Almanac of American Politics*, which compiles congressional roll-call votes over the past decade. These votes concerned education savings accounts and IRAs that could be used for religious schools, restrictions on abortion (such as parental notification and the partial-birth ban), and various bills affecting homosexual issues. A senator's vote was coded "secularist" if the position taken on the bill was in accord with a majority of secularist sentiment (and in opposition to a majority of religiously traditionalist opinion) on this type of issue in the ANES and Pew surveys. A ten on this scale indicates that the senator had a perfect secularist score; a zero indicates a perfect antisecularist or traditionalist score. The average Democratic Senate score was 8.9; the average for the Republicans was 0.95. Senator Kerry scored a perfect 10. With the retirements of John Breaux from Louisiana (who had a score of 1.0) and Georgia's Zell Miller (who scored 0 during his tenure), senate Democrats will in all likelihood come to reflect even more the secularism of Kerry and even less the values of cultural traditionalism.

The recent attention paid by media elites to the "God Gulf" means that the pivotal role played by secularists in this divide may be more difficult to mask than in the past. This is particularly so since the advent of cable television political news programs. A January 2004 Pew survey found that cable news has overtaken national network nightly news as the principal source for information about the presidential campaign, especially among the college-educated and among registered voters. Cable news viewers are more likely than those who watch network news to be provided with information about the political clash between the forces of secularism and traditionalism—a motif that has been a recurring theme on the *O'Reilly Factor*, and increasingly discussed on other cable political news programs during the current season of primary elections. In contrast, viewers of network evening television news programs are left in the dark about the secularist and traditionalist divide in the electorate. When we checked the abstracts from the Vanderbilt University Television News Archive for stories between 2003 and 2004 on the religion gap theme, we could not find a single news segment devoted to the topic.

The brief entry of secularism into political discourse was disquieting to many Democrats. Howard Dean tried to ameliorate his "religion problem" by expressing his admiration for Job (whom he placed in the New Testament) and by flying down to Georgia the weekend before the Iowa caucus to attend church with Jimmy Carter. John Kerry's injection of "God" into his standard stump speech on tax loopholes and the environment was so out of character that it caught

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the attention of the *New York Times*. The efforts by Democratic presidential aspirants to distance themselves from the "secularist" tag are reminiscent of the flight of Democratic politicians from the "liberal" label since the Reagan era. Underlying Democratic unease with secularism is their recognition that an overt and public embrace of secularism is politically damaging in the United States, a nation that once was famously said to have "the soul of a church." (It seems that Chesterton's dictum has not yet been rendered out of date.)

Since the implosion of the Dean candidacy, the major media have shown little interest in the secularist-religious divide in the electorate. Yet the emphatically secularist record of John Kerry, and the continuing agitations over abortion, gay marriage, school choice, and the place of religion in public life, will inevitably keep before us—if we have eyes to see it—the clash of worldviews that increasingly defines our politics.

The question for our media is: Will they attend to the secularist-religious divide, or will they revert to writing about these value conflicts in terms of a tolerant pluralism assaulted by "divisive" sectarians? In view of where the electorate comes down when given a choice between religion and secularism, and in view of the dominant political proclivities of the major media, one might reasonably bet on a return to the discredited categories.

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Rhetoric and the Word

Peter J. Leithart

A *Tale of a Tub*, published anonymously in 1704, was the first of Jonathan Swift's great satires. It tells of three brothers, Peter, Martin, and Jack, who represent, respectively, Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism. Their father has given each of the brothers a coat, with instructions not to alter it in any way, but each quickly changes his coat to fit his own tastes. Swift uses this story to satirize the petty divisions and puerile squabbling of Christian sects.

The most memorable part of *Tale of a Tub*, however, is the narrator, who digresses with abandon on every possible subject, even providing a "Digression in Praise of Digressions." One of the most famous of these digressions is one concerning madness, which includes one of the most famous passages in all of Swift's work. Swift states his preference for wisdom that "converses about the surface" to "pretended philosophy" that attempts to delve into the "depth of things." Then he goes on:

> The two senses, to which all objects first address themselves, are the sight and the touch; these never examine farther than the color, the shape, the size, and whatever other qualities dwell, or are drawn by art upon the outward of bodies; and then comes reason officiously with tools for cutting, and opening, and mangling, and piercing, offering to demonstrate, that they are not the same consistence quite through. Now I take this to be the last degree of perverting nature; one of whose eternal laws it is, to put her best furniture forward. And therefore, in order to save the charges of all such expensive anatomy from the time to come, I do here think fit to inform the reader, that in such conclusions as these, reason is certainly in the right, and that in most corporeal beings, which have fallen under my cognizance, the outside has been infinitely preferable to the in; whereof I have been farther convinced from some late experiments. Last week I saw a woman flayed, and you would hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse.

Swift is aiming at one of the most important tendencies of the age in which he was living. As Daniel Cottom has argued in his fascinating account of the Enlightenment, *Cannibals and Philosophers*, anatomy was (along with geometry) one of the model sciences of the age. Joseph Glanvill (1636-1680), for instance, had mocked the ancient abhorrence of dissecting human bodies as "superstition," and urged that it was instead an "excellent Art, which is one of the most useful in a humane Life, and tends mightily to the eviscerating of Nature, and disclosure of the Springs of its Motion." Swift discerned the same passion to eviscerate and dissect behind seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thought generally. For the Enlightenment philosophers, seeing rightly demanded dissection that cut past the surface of things to their inner workings; only by dissection could one see for oneself, which is, curiously enough, the etymological meaning of the word "autopsy."

The second, and more crucial observation about

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the passage is stylistic: Swift combats philosophers who mangle in order to understand, but in doing so he does not use their weapons or let them choose the battlefield. He responds with satire and rhetoric to a mode of thought that is analytical and dialectical. That last line of his could do more damage to anatomy (in both its strictly scientific and expanded philosophical senses) than any set of arguments could have. It made the anatomists appear gruesome and darkly funny. No one remembers even the names of Swift's opponents, but his line continues to be widely quoted (usually out of context), because it is brilliant rhetoric.

The twentieth-century poet W. H. Auden once commented on the absence of rhetoric among theologians. Were a poet to use a phrase such as "mortal sin," he said, it would be meant as a hyperbolic way of warning people away from certain kinds of behavior. When a theologian uses the phrase, it has a very exact and technical meaning. Theologians are the least rhetorical of writers.

Auden's observation is undeniably accurate, but when we glance at the literary shape of the Bible, it is difficult to fathom why it should be so. After all, the Bible has no theology that does not have a rhetorical shape and thrust. It is full of stories, laws, rituals, proverbs, psalms, genealogies, visions, and prophecies that often take poetic form. Scripture includes the severe diatribes of Jeremiah, the unutterable beauties of Isaiah and John, the goading wisdom of Solomon, the luminous allusiveness of Genesis and Matthew. The closest that the Bible comes to technical theology is the letters of Paul, but no one can read Galatians, Corinthians, or Paul's sermons in Acts without realizing that he is a master rhetorician. To be sure, Paul's rhetoric is not necessarily the rhetoric of pagan Greece or Rome (though scholars are finding that often it is), but he is rhetorical in that he speaks and writes above all to persuade, convict, and change his readers.

How did Christian theologians, who take these books as their Scriptures, abandon rhetoric? That is, of course, a very long story, but the essential outlines can be told briefly. The history of Western theology can be seen as a progression through the trivium of liberal arts, from rhetoric to grammar to logic. St. Augustine in the fourth century, for instance, was trained as a rhetorician and was more deeply indebted to this training than to his eclectic philosophical sources. Long after he had shed much of his Neoplatonism, his treatises remained filled with dense punning that displays his delight in language and his verbal virtuosity. By the time of Anselm in the eleventh century, theology had shifted from a rhetorical into a grammatical mode. Anselm attacked Roscillinus' Trinitarian formulations largely on grammatical grounds; and even Anselm's ontological argument for the existence of God can be read as a meditation on the workings of language, especially of the word "God."

For a brief time, medieval theologians flirted with the idea that theology was a form of wisdom (*sapientia*), a position advocated by Bonaventure. But with Abelard and especially with St. Thomas Aquinas, dialectic or logic became the dominant form of theological discourse. For Aquinas, theology was not a form of preaching. Nor was it allegorical meditation or commentary, nor close grammatical analysis of texts, nor a kind of wisdom. Theology had become a science. Of course, Aquinas' use of the word "science" is not the same as ours, but he did have in mind a rational system in which dialectic played a large role. Ever since, theology, including Protestant theology, has labored under the yoke of dialectic. There is an easy proof of this, if proof is needed: Does anyone read dogmaticians, Protestant or Catholic, for their literary style? Would anyone mistake theology for poetry?

Fortunately, theologians such as David Cunningham have recently begun working to correct this flaw by teasing out the implications of "theology as faithful persuasion." But this effort inevitably raises the specter of postmodernism. For a theorist such as the late Paul de Man, language is rhetorical "all the way down." Insofar as language is grammar, it aspires toward determinate meanings, attempts to refer to things outside language, and tries to order itself logically. Yet these aspirations and endeavors are continually undermined by rhetoric, which disperses meaning into myriad contradictory possibilities. Every text, de Man argued, "simultaneously asserts and denies the authority of its own rhetorical mode." But Christians should not be cowed by the charge of flirtation with postmodernism. Christians escape the vertiginous implications of de Man's theory because we confess a transcendent Logos in whom all meanings have their focus. This faith frees us to splash happily and refreshingly in the pool of rhetoric without fear of drowning. Christians need not fear theorists who claim that there is no absolute anchor for meaning within human language. Of course not; only fools ever thought such an anchor could be found anywhere but within God Himself, who must reveal it to us.

With its "privileging" of rhetoric, postmodern theory may provide some impetus for Christians to heal the centuries-wide breach between theology and rhetoric. Someday, perhaps soon, there will be Christian

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theologians who in their writing negate Auden's comment, who can respond to modern heresies and idolatries with insight and also with the pugnacity of a Paul or a Jeremiah, and who will skewer the anatomists and dissectors in our age as decisively and deliciously as Jonathan Swift did in his.

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Russia: Religion on a Leash

Lawrence A. Uzzell

To those who value stability above all other political goods, Russia should look more attractive now than at any time since the early 1980s. That is especially true for church-state relations. Religious liberty, after shrinking since the mid-1990s, now seems to have reached an equilibrium. A year from now Russians will probably not have any more freedom of conscience than they have today, but they should not have significantly less. Religious freedom differs in this respect from freedom of the press, which is on a continuing downward trajectory.

The reason for the difference is that Vladimir Putin has achieved everything he needs in church-state relations: he has no need to put believers in chains, because he already has them on a leash. It is inconceivable that a national leader of any major religious confession in Russia—Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, or Jewish—would energetically voice criticisms of the secular government's policies on any issue that the Kremlin considers important. Such leaders rarely make any statements about public policy that could not have been drafted by Putin's press office. In return, the Russian state discriminates in favor of the mainstream leaders—not just against other religions, but against rivals within their own confessions. It favors some Jewish leaders against others, some Baptists against others—and, of course, the Sovietized Moscow Patriarchate against rival claimants to Russia's Orthodox Christian heritage. The state has also increasingly come to discriminate against religions seen as "foreign," even if those faiths in fact have deep roots in Russia's pre-Bolshevik history.

Putin's Russia is reviving the old habit of treating every social institution, whether secular or religious, as if it were an extension of the state. A characteristic example came in February, when Russia's largest Old Believer denomination held a nationwide council to elect its new head. Just before the council, Old Believer priests across the country were summoned to visit the headquarters of the FSB (the renamed KGB) in their respective provinces. The secret-police officers asked the priests what they thought of the mainstream Russian Orthodox Church, asked whom they intended to vote for as their new Metropolitan, and hinted at which of the candidates the FSB preferred. The good news in this case is that the Old Believers stayed true to their three-century tradition of tenacious independence. The frail, elderly candidate favored by the secret police lost by a wide margin to a young bishop, one of the Old Believers' most effective evangelists. The older man even announced that he would prefer to lose.

Will the state now intensify its discrimination against this most distinctively Russian form of Christianity? That probably will depend on how successful the Old Believers' newly elected Metropolitan Andrian turns out to be. If they come to be seen as a serious competitive threat to the mainstream Orthodox, they can expect state harassment to grow—as it already has for energetic Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses. Potentially the Old Believers have especially strong appeal: unlike Protestants they share Russian spirituality's traditional emphasis on liturgy and iconography, while unlike the Moscow Patriarchate they are not tainted by servility to tyrants. At the same time they are especially vulnerable to state repression, as they have no lobby in the West to mount international campaigns on their behalf.

Note that I use the words "discrimination" and "repression" rather than "persecution." Persecution is what happens in China, where you can lose your job or even be arrested simply for attending a prayer meeting. Stalinist methods of that sort are almost nonexistent in today's Russia: you can say whatever prayers you like within your own home, and even invite your friends. But if you belong to a disfavored religious minority you may run into problems when you try to take your faith into the public square. You may find it impossible to buy or rent a building for your congregation's worship services, or even to conduct an open-air revival meeting. In general, the less your denomination collaborated with the old Soviet regime, the more likely you are to suffer repression today.

An especially clear example is the independent (*initsiativniki*) Baptists. Formally known as the

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Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, they split from the larger and better-known Baptist Union in 1961 after the latter accepted certain compromises demanded by the Soviet state. For example, the Baptist Union agreed not to teach religion to children—not even the children of its own members. Boris Yeltsin's 1997 law on religion—a milestone in his turn away from his own reforms of the early 1990s—formally stripped the *initsiativniki* and similar groups of rights which the Baptist Union retained, such as the right to distribute religious books. The enforcement of that law has become harsher during the past two years, and sometimes the independent Baptists have had to meet for worship in forests, as they did during the Soviet years.

The 1997 law was explicitly xenophobic, creating extra regulatory burdens on foreign religious organizations and their representatives in Russia. But the first few years after its passage gave rise to a traditionally Russian paradox. In practice, domestic religious minorities found themselves facing more difficulties than did Western missionaries, despite waves of propaganda about "spiritual invasion." Officials gave less energy to enforcing the law's formal provisions than to continuing Russia's old practice of welcoming visitors while trampling on its own subjects. Also, the law provoked an unexpectedly strong response from the U.S. Congress, the Vatican, and other Western institutions, and Russian officials perceived these institutions as being primarily interested in the religious freedom of their fellow Westerners, not that of purely indigenous minorities. This perception, unfortunately, was and is largely accurate. Under Putin, however, foreign missionaries have lost ground. Economic revival has made Moscow less dependent on foreign aid; the so-called "coalition against terrorism" has created new opportunities for deal-making; and Putin has been even better at personally charming George W. Bush than Yeltsin was at wooing his predecessor.

Overall, foreign and domestic religious minorities now find themselves on a more equal footing within Russia—not because the domestic ones have more freedom than they did in the 1990s, but because the foreigners have less. Mark Elliott of Samford University, America's leading expert on Protestantism in Russia, estimated last fall that there have been "eighty-four known expulsions of foreign religious workers (1997-2003), including fifty-four Protestants, fifteen Muslims, seven Catholics, three Buddhists, three Mormons, and two Jehovah's Witnesses." He stressed that his figures "undoubtedly are incomplete because of the desire of many to avoid publicity." Most of these expulsions took place after Putin rose to power in late 1999. Typically the officials responsible have cited vague reasons of "national security"—without producing any concrete evidence. Especially noteworthy were the expulsions of five Roman Catholic clergy in 2002. That figure exceeded the combined total from all previous years, and for the first time one of the expellees was a bishop.

Now the situation has stabilized. We have seen no further expulsions of Roman Catholic clergy since September 2002, but none of those previously expelled has been allowed to return. Roman Catholic priests and nuns continue to report harassment by local officials, such as protracted wrangles over getting and renewing visas. They continue to experience frustrations in seeking the return of nineteenth-century church buildings which used to serve the pockets of ethnic Germans, Poles, and other Roman Catholic communities scattered across czarist Russia. These structures, built by and for Roman Catholics, were confiscated by the Soviet state and often remain in the state's hands to this day. (One should note that the Orthodox often have the same problem, though not to the same degree. Much depends on the political connections of the concert hall or other secular institution now occupying what used to be a place of worship.) Last year the Roman Catholic parish in Tula, about a hundred miles south of Moscow, sought temporary access to their stolen church building so that the visiting papal nuncio could say Mass there. The local authorities refused, and the Mass took place on the building's front steps.

With Roman Catholics, Putin has been especially successful at showing the world a civilized face, visiting the Vatican for friendly, well-publicized meetings with John Paul II, even while the Pope's spiritual children were getting far from friendly treatment back in Russia. The key to this double game, as to others played by the Kremlin, is a certain division of labor. Putin specializes in telling the West what it wants to hear, while anonymous, taciturn bureaucrats do the dirty work. This particular game includes a third player, the Moscow Patriarchate, which plays the role of propagandist. The denunciations of Roman Catholic "aggression" in Russia come from the Patriarchate, while the concrete measures restricting Roman Catholic activities come from the state.

Unfortunately, the Vatican has played right into Putin's hands with its excessive emphasis on the Pope's hoped-for personal visit to Russia. If that visit had ever taken place, it would have been primarily a feel-good

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media event, making it even easier for Moscow to continue restricting the religious freedom of rank-and-file Roman Catholics.

Under Putin, corruption has continued to be one of the major realities of Russian life, despite the highly publicized crackdowns on a few carefully selected "oligarchs." Squeezing citizens for bribes is still routine among government officials, from the traffic police to university admissions officers, and there is no reason to think that church-state relations are an exception. This is a difficult subject to investigate: both the official who extorts a bribe and the clergyman who pays it want to keep the whole affair a secret. But every now and then we get a chance to peak behind the veil.

For example, in 2001 the Moscow branch of the Salvation Army was negotiating with the city bureaucracy responsible for registering religious organizations. (Official registration is vital for activities such as renting buildings.) The key bureaucratic gatekeeper, Vladimir Zhbankov, told the Salvation Army's Colonel Kenneth Baillie that the Army needed more competent legal advice to help it through the application process. Zhbankov then recommended a specific firm—one which he himself had previously headed. Colonel Baillie decided not to accept this outrageous recommendation, and the Salvation Army soon found itself in a long court battle threatening its very right to exist in Moscow. Not every religious leader is as principled as Colonel Baillie. Father Simon Stephens, of the Church of England's sole Moscow parish, had a similar meeting with Zhbankov about that parish's stalled registration. Unlike his Salvation Army counterpart, the Anglican priest agreed to hire the bureaucrat's favored law firm. Within days the parish's application was accepted.

The opportunity to win concessions by bribes is one reason, though not the main reason, why Russia is not and will not be an Orthodox Christian theocracy. Some articulate members of the political and cultural elite want Orthodoxy to become the new state ideology—not classic, patristic Orthodoxy but a warped version that values nationalism and statism above all else. But they simply lack the political weight to make that happen.

Post-Soviet Russia, contrary to the triumphalist claims of both Orthodox leaders and Western missionaries, remains a profoundly secularized country. Only two or three percent of Russians are serious, practicing Orthodox. These as a whole are even more politically apathetic than their countrymen; attempts to form a united, influential Orthodox political movement have yielded unimpressive results. Committed atheists still occupy many influential positions, especially in educational institutions. Moreover, making Orthodoxy the state religion would create problems with Russia's huge Muslim minority, about 15 percent of the population.

On the other hand, several federal agencies have signed formal agreements with the Moscow Patriarchate giving it special access to institutions such as prisons. Though Muslims and even Protestants also have such access in some provinces, they have no formal concordats with federal ministries, and they are justified in worrying about discrimination. Nevertheless, the religious minorities facing the most serious threats to their very right to exist are not those whose beliefs are most divergent from Orthodox teachings; despite hysteria over exotic groups such as the Moonies (a hysteria grossly disproportionate to their tiny numbers), such cults have not faced much more difficulty in practice than Protestants and Roman Catholics. Russia's bureaucrats are most likely to restrict those minority faiths that they perceive as undermining the material or ideological interests of the Russian state, or those that simply refuse to provide bribes such as free trips abroad. The bureaucrats have no interest in enforcing Orthodox theology.

Unfortunately, some human-rights activists, such as my friend Lev Levinson, who worked heroically against the repressive 1997 law, have gone too far in setting themselves against Orthodoxy; they are promoting not just freedom of religion but freedom *from* religion on the French model. Such activists have opposed even the slightest manifestation of religious symbolism at public ceremonies such as presidential inaugurations; they have also opposed any efforts to introduce Orthodox religious teaching into the schools as an optional elective. (On the latter issue, however, they are right to warn that what is optional today might be made mandatory tomorrow.) Last year the Andrei Sakharov Museum in Moscow triggered a totally unnecessary conflict by hosting a tasteless modern-art exhibit that desecrated icons and likened the Eucharistic wine to Coca-Cola. Ultranationalist thugs invaded the museum and destroyed some of these "art" objects. The ongoing scandal in the courts has been a godsend to the enemies of religious freedom.

Although Russia is in many ways a post-Christian society, the political constituency for an extreme, French-style separation of church and state is even smaller than the one that would support a theocracy. The Orthodox Church still commands tremendous instinctive loyalty as a symbol of national identity; most Russians want it to be respected and honored even while keeping it at a comfortable distance from their own lives. Thus it is not surprising

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that the Putin administration has failed to produce a systematic, coherent policy on religion. Though former officials of the Soviet-era Council for Religious Affairs are scattered throughout the national and provincial power structures, they have failed in their efforts to restore their old agency at the national level; Putin's inner circle of advisers includes nobody who specializes in religious affairs.

As Moscow correspondent Geraldine Fagan of the Forum 18 News Service observed last summer, "Religious freedom concerns are consequently resolved in an ad hoc manner, if the Kremlin is involved at all, or are more usually left to government departments and/or regional administrations." In Putin's Russia, violations of religious freedom are not ideological but bureaucratic: the state seeks not to invade the innermost recesses of people's souls but to encourage and even subsidize religious leaders whose public statements harmonize with its own policies, while marginalizing others. It now has all the tools it needs to crack down hard on those who get out of line on matters such as the military atrocities in Chechnya. The more Putin succeeds in consolidating his elected dictatorship, the less often those tools will actually need to be used. What he wants is a tame clerisy as well as tame courts, legislators, and news media. To a striking extent, that is what he already has.

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Without a Bell

God comes to us without a bell:
God's spell
is cast by larks and honeybees
in trees.
Their chorus, praising field and brook,
spells out His book—
one pious men may overlook,
expecting bells to say, *He's here!*
But nature makes the gospels clear:
God's spell in trees spells out His book.

Ralph C. La Rosa

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The Rebirth of Apologetics

Avery Cardinal Dulles

For the Christian it is axiomatic that faith is a gift from God, a grace. Since the Council of Orange in the sixth century, the Church has consistently taught that even the first beginnings of faith depend on the working of the Holy Spirit. But the Councils of the Church assure us that even so, faith is not a blind leap into the dark but an act fully consonant with reason.

Over the centuries, Christian theology has exerted itself to keep the proper balance. Faith, besides being a gracious gift of God, is also a free and responsible decision on the part of the believer. God's grace does not circumvent or suppress our native powers, but guides them so that they may act more perfectly. The believer has motives for believing that would not be present were it not for the light of grace. In his great encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, Pope John Paul II repeatedly declares that faith, by sharpening the inner eye of the mind, enables reason to rise above itself and in no sense diminishes it. Reinforcing reason, faith enables it to transcend its normal limits.

Faith, therefore, is not a simple achievement of reason. It is the work of reason submitting to the word of God, which comes by way of revelation. God, as the infinite source of all that is or can be, lies immeasurably beyond all that we can infer from the created order. His inner essence and intentions are known only to Himself unless He chooses to reveal them. For our sakes He has revealed something of Himself and His saving plans so that we may love and serve Him better. God's great and unsurpassable revelation of Himself is His Son, His eternal Word, who has become flesh in Jesus Christ. The Christian clings to that living and incarnate Word, in whom salvation is to be found.

In this framework we may consider the task of apologetics, the rational defense of faith. Apologetics cannot and should not attempt to demonstrate the truth of the mysteries of faith, which, as I have said, lie beyond human investigation and are believed on the strength of God's word, more certain than any logical deduction. But in order to believe we must find reasons for judging that what purports to be God's word really is his word. To spell out these reasons in a systematic way is the task of apologetics.

Jesus in his life on earth gave reasons for believing in him. He pointed to his wonderful deeds, which fulfilled the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament and were wrought by the power of God. Since the first Easter, Christians have regarded Christ's loving self-abasement on the Cross, followed by his glorious resurrection, as the preeminent sign of his divine Sonship. For the past two thousand years, apologists have contended that for those willing to ponder the evidence, the reasons for believing are more than adequate. They give ample assurance that it would be unreasonable to withhold assent.

Apologetics has to meet the adversaries of the faith where they are in each successive generation. In the first three centuries the literature was predominantly defensive: it sought to stave off persecution by convincing Roman officials that Christians were good citizens who obeyed the laws and prayed for the Emperor. In the next few centuries apologetics turned more aggressively to refute philosophers who claimed that Stoicism and Neoplatonism could provide all that was needed for a blessed life. Then in the Middle Ages Christian apologists increasingly directed their

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attention to Jews and Muslims, arguing that Jesus fulfilled the messianic prophecies of the Hebrew Bible, whereas Mohammed did not.

In early modern times apologetics took on fresh philosophical opponents. On the one hand, it sought to refute skeptics, who contended that reason could know nothing about God, the soul, and immortality; on the other hand, it responded to rationalists who maintained that human reason could prove so much about these realities that no revelation was needed.

In the nineteenth century Christian apologetics underwent still another shift. It responded to natural scientists and historical critics who attacked the reliability of the Bible on what they regarded as scientific and historical grounds. Apologists had to show that new discoveries concerning the antiquity of the universe and human origins did nothing to detract from God's role as Creator and that modern historical criticism did not invalidate the biblical record of God's revelatory deeds and words.

Toward the middle of the twentieth century apologetics, perhaps for the first time, acquired a bad name among Christians themselves. Thriving organizations such as the Catholic Evidence Guild and the Catholic Truth Society suddenly vanished from the scene. Apologetics courses, which had been a mainstay of religious instruction in colleges and seminaries both Protestant and Catholic, disappeared from the curriculum. In their place a new discipline known as fundamental theology emerged. Unlike apologetics, fundamental theology did not try to speak to unbelievers but contented itself with analyzing for the sake of believers how God brings human beings to assent to His word.

Why did this sudden collapse occur? Four principal reasons may be offered. The unpopularity of apologetics arose, first of all, from its own excesses. Among many Christian thinkers apologetics threatened to absorb almost the whole of theology. In some cases it tried to prove too much, claiming to demonstrate by cogent arguments not only the credibility but the truth of Christian revelation. Meeting the scientific historians on their own ground, the Swiss Capuchin Hilarin Felder maintained that the Gospels are "in their full extent and in the strictest sense of the word, historical authorities and scientific evidence." Then he concluded, to his own satisfaction, if not that of the reader, "Just as only that study of Christ which confesses the Messiahship and divinity of our Savior can lay claim to the spirit of Christianity, so only can such a study claim to follow a scientific method. Every christological conception which regards Jesus as a mere man is, if historically considered, a fanciful monstrosity." Apologetics fell under suspicion for promising more than it could deliver and for manipulating the evidence to support the desired conclusions. It did not always escape the vice that Paul Tillich labeled "sacred dishonesty."

A second defect was the tendency of apologists to revise Christian doctrine to make it more acceptable to the secular mind. Liberal Protestant theologians, abandoning the effort to prove the divinity of Christ, settled for a diluted version of the faith in which Christ was no more than a sublime ethical teacher who inculcated the love of God and neighbor. These apologists ceased to defend supernatural occurrences such as the virginal conception of Jesus, his miraculous deeds, and his glorious resurrection. Reacting against this retreat from orthodoxy, the great Swiss Protestant, Karl Barth, judged that apologetics by its very nature leads to compromise with unbelief. Apologists, he charged, seeking to make the gospel credible, marched onto the field carrying a white flag, and ended by surrendering essentials of the faith.

Barth's criticisms contain a salutary warning. Some Catholic literature today practices a kind of doctrinal minimalism. Seeking to show how little one needs to believe, such apologetics gives the impression that belief is a burden rather than a privilege. If faith is to be trimmed back to the furthest limits, as this approach recommends, the reader begins to wonder why anyone should be asked to carry the incubus of faith at all?

A third temptation is for apologists to emphasize human activity at the expense of grace. They sometimes write as though we could reason ourselves into believing. Reacting against this distortion, some Protestants went to the opposite extreme. On the ground that human nature is totally corrupted by the Fall, they contended that it could play no role at all in the approach to faith. Giving a new interpretation to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, they dismissed apologetics as an effort of sinful human beings to justify themselves without grace. This exaltation of blind faith frequently goes hand in hand with a strong predestinationism. Choosing whom He wants to save, God infuses faith in some and leaves the rest of the human race to sink into perdition. In this fideist framework apologetics would be quite pointless. But Catholics, at least, will not follow this route because the Church teaches that God offers His grace to all but coerces none to believe. Faith, as I have said above, is a fully human act performed with the help of grace.

The recent unpopularity of apologetics does not stem exclusively from theological considerations such as the three already considered. Sociological factors are also at work. In a pluralist society like our own, religious faith is felt to be divisive. To avoid conflict Christians frequently take refuge in the excuse that people should be

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left free to make up their own minds about what to believe. After all, they say, no one can be argued into faith. Even to raise the question of truth in religion is considered impolite.

This withdrawal from controversy, though it seems to be kind and courteous, is insidious. Religion becomes marginalized to the degree that it no longer dares to raise its voice in public. This privatization has debilitating consequences for the faith of believers themselves. If we do not consider that it is important for others to hear the Christian proclamation, we inevitably begin to question its importance for ourselves. The result is a massive loss of interest in religious teaching. The reluctance of believers to defend their faith has produced all too many fuzzyminded and listless Christians, who care very little about what is to be believed. Their halfhearted religion is far removed from that of the apostles and the martyrs. It is a degenerate offspring of authentic Christianity.

Recognizing that faith is enfeebled if its rational grounds are denied, committed Christians are today returning to apologetics. The titles of recent books register the change of climate. Not long ago it was typical to find books with titles such as *The Bankruptcy of Apologetics* (Willard L. Sperry), *Unapologetic Theology* (William C. Placher), and *Humble Apologetics* (John G. Stackhouse, Jr.), but today there are some refreshing alternatives. In 1990 Paul Griffiths published his carefully reasoned *An Apology for Apologetics* and in 2001 William A. Dembski and Jay Wesley Richards edited a collection of essays, *Unapologetic Apologetics: Meeting the Challenges of Theological Studies*. These two titles are indicative of a resurgence.

All over the United States there are signs of a revival. Evangelical Protestants are taking the lead. Apologists of the stature of Norman L. Geisler, William Lane Craig, and J. P. Moreland are publishing scholarly works on natural theology and Christian evidences. Unlike the liberal Protestants of an earlier vintage, these Evangelicals insist on orthodoxy; they uncompromisingly maintain the fundamental Christian doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the bodily resurrection of Jesus. And their method succeeds. The churches that combine a concern for orthodoxy with vigorous apologetics are growing. Their seminaries attract large numbers of enthusiastic students.

A similar revival is occurring, albeit more slowly, in Catholic circles. Many of the leading proponents are converts from other Christian denominations, especially former Evangelicals. Peter Kreeft, at Boston College, plies an apologetics not far removed from that of the Evangelicals mentioned above. Scott Hahn and several colleagues at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, confidently proclaim that the Protestant Bible points to the truth of the Catholic faith. EWTN, the network founded by Mother Angelica, broadcasts very successful programs of popular apologetics. Karl Keating, who runs the "Catholic Answers" institute in San Diego, has done much to stem the tide of Hispanics defecting to fundamentalist Protestant sects. There is also a renewal of interest in English Catholic converts of the last century, including G. K. Chesterton, Ronald Knox, and Arnold Lunn. Many recent converts are publishing their own stories of faith.

These efforts, to be sure, meet with some criticism from within the Catholic Church. The authors are accused of holding a propositional view of revelation, of proof-texting, and of triumphalism. The accusations must be weighed. If they come from a mentality that minimizes the doctrinal component of the faith or shrinks from any kind of confrontation, the criticisms should probably be discounted. Apologetics has to be somewhat controversial; it should forthrightly defend the settled teaching of the Church.

Contemporary apologetics uses a variety of methods. The so-called "classical approach" adheres to patterns familiar since the seventeenth century. First, it uses philosophy to prove the existence of God and the possibility of revelation; then it turns to historiography to vindicate the biblical record of sacred history and its culmination in Jesus Christ. This approach can be quite effective with readers who are adept in philosophy and who have some prior interest in Holy Scripture. But it must be practiced with discretion.

In natural theology care must be taken to build on the intuition of being that undergirds traditional metaphysics. If one tries to prove God's existence by the methods of empirical science or purely conceptual logic, the proofs do not stand up under rigorous examination. In their handling of biblical evidences for revelation, some contemporary apologists, like their predecessors a century ago, seek to establish the historicity of the biblical miracles by objective historical method. I have no desire to fault the enterprise. Skeptical historians strive in vain to disprove the facts that Jesus claimed divinity for himself and rose corporeally from the dead. But the evidential approach cannot be expected to succeed with historians who practice their craft with agnostic or atheistic presuppositions. They will generally admit that Jesus existed and attracted some committed disciples through his preaching and wonderful deeds, but will protest that

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their method cannot say anything about the supernatural. They will give no serious consideration to the claims that Jesus was born of a virgin mother or that he left the tomb and ascended to heaven in his risen body. To overcome the objections raised by analytic philosophy and secular historiography, apologetics needs to shift its ground. It must find a method by which people can be brought to affirm what they would otherwise dismiss as untenable.

Here, as in many other matters, Pope John Paul II has given timely leadership. Personalism, he believes, is the best medicine for awakening the world from its metaphysical slumber. He begins his arguments for the existence of God by reflecting not on the finitude, mutability, contingency, and order of the universe, as was traditionally done, but on the aspirations of the human heart for communion with the divine. In his view human beings are made for transcendent truth, and such truth turns out to be a person who says of himself, "I am the truth." The Church is a place in which human persons enter into communion with one another in Jesus Christ. The Pope thus presents an intersubjective or interpersonal version of Christianity that can be a very attractive alternative to readers who suffer from the anonymity of contemporary collectivism or the isolation of contemporary individualism.

In his program for the new evangelization as set forth in *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II reminds his readers that the world today looks not so much for arguments as for witnesses—that is to say, for believers who will testify by word and deed to a Lord whom they have encountered in experiences of faith. "Belief," according to the Pope in *Fides et Ratio*, "is often humanly richer than mere evidence, because it involves an interpersonal relationship and brings into play not only a person's capacity to know but also the deeper capacity to entrust oneself to others, to enter into a relationship with them which is intimate and enduring." This emphasis on personal trust, I believe, holds great promise for the renewal of apologetics.

In recent centuries apologetics has concentrated mainly on how we get to God. It has relied on quasi-scientific methods of inquiry that owe more to Descartes, Locke, and Spinoza than to the prayerful searching of an Augustine, an Anselm, a Pascal, or a Newman. In a revealed religion such as Christianity, the key question is how God comes to us and opens up a world of meaning not accessible to human investigative powers.

The answer, I suggest, is testimony. Revelation, as God's word, is a form of divine testimony. Faith is by its nature an acceptance of the word of God, the witness who can neither deceive nor be deceived. God's word comes to us through human witnesses: the prophets and apostles, the inspired authors of Holy Scripture, and the tradition of the Church, which faithfully passes on and interprets what it has received from Christ and the apostles.

From its beginnings Christianity has been propagated through the living testimony of believers. The apostles were conscious of imparting a message that came from God. The Book of Revelation records the testimony of John, "who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:2). Paul writes of himself and the other apostles, "We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us." He congratulates the Thessalonians for receiving his teaching "not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Believers today have to rely likewise on testimony.

Personal testimony calls for an epistemology quite distinct from the scientific, as commonly understood. The scientist treats the datum to be investigated as a passive object to be mastered and brought within the investigator's intellectual horizons. Interpretations proffered by others are not accepted on authority but are tested by critical probing. But when we proceed by testimony, the situation is very different. The event is an interpersonal encounter, in which the witness plays an active role, making an impact upon us. Without in any way compelling us to believe, the witness calls for a free assent that involves personal respect and trust. To reject the message is to withhold confidence in the witness. To accept it is a trusting submission to the witness's authority. To the extent that we believe, we renounce our autonomy and willingly depend on the judgment of others.

The methods of apologetics outlined above—natural theology and history—are primarily scientific. As philosophers or historians we treat the datum as something impersonal to be brought within the compass of our own world of thought. This method is useful for confirming certain doctrines and refuting certain errors, but it rarely leads to conversion. Since the passage from unbelief to Christian faith involves conversion to a radically new outlook, testimony plays an indispensable role. Through the words of His witnesses God can bring us to affirm what we could not have discovered for ourselves.

To demonstrate that belief in religious testimony can be warranted, apologetics is required. It must present criteria for credibility. Some of the criteria have already been worked out in other disciplines. Historians, journalists, and juries regularly rely on witnesses. To avoid mistakes they have to devise tests of reliability. They look for witnesses who are in a position to know and

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who have no motive for deceiving others. They prefer early sources, as close as possible to the events, and those that rely on multiple independent witnesses.

Analogous criteria may be used in apologetics for evaluating religious testimony, such as that contained in Scripture. But the criteria used for academic history are not fully applicable. The biblical authors are not professional historians, concerned with reporting exactly what Jesus had said and done on this or that occasion. They are believers aiming to communicate the gospel and evoke faith in Christ the Savior. As we read at the conclusion of John's Gospel, "These words are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

It is difficult to devise criteria for evaluating religious testimony, but some rules of thumb may be proposed. I suggest the following five: convergence, firmness, novelty, transformation, and illuminative power.

In the first place, the New Testament testimony is early, multiple, and convergent. The Evangelists come from different communities and give different perspectives on the life of Christ, yet they agree on substantials. The New Testament contains many theologies but only one vision of Christ and the Christian life. All the accounts present Jesus as the Son who speaks and acts with sovereign majesty, who lays down his life for the redemption of the world, and who rises triumphant from the grave. They agree that he held forth a revolutionary ideal of human life, exalting poverty, humility, love of neighbor, and patience in suffering as the way to eternal salvation.

Second, the authors do not speak as inquirers trying to fathom the purposes of God by human speculation but rather as witnesses to a truth that has come to them with the strength of a revelation. Accepting what they have been taught as the word of God, they proclaim it with unwavering assurance. The firmness of their conviction is an indication that God has spoken to them with proofs of power.

Third, the message they proclaim is one that they would not have accepted had it not been for a visitation from on high. As pious Jews they had held that Yahweh alone was God and that no human being could be divine. But now, after encountering Jesus, they pay him divine honors, call upon him as Lord and God, and worship him as the equal of the Father. Apart from revelation, what could have convinced them that a lowly Galilean carpenter was Lord of the universe?

Fourth, the apostles and their associates were transformed by the message they proclaimed. They did not take possession of it, but were possessed by it. From timid disciples, anxiously bolting the doors of the Upper Room, they became apostles openly proclaiming their faith at the risk of imprisonment, scourging, and martyrdom. No external opposition can keep them from speaking of what they have seen and heard. Their extraordinary dynamism is evidence of God's transforming power.

Fifth, the qualities of the message are such as would befit a revelation. It provides clues to the riddles of suffering and death that no human philosophy could provide. It gives hope to those who, humanly speaking, have nothing to hope for; it offers means of forgiveness to sinners stuck in a morass of guilt. Overturning the barriers between nation and nation and the hostility between different races and ethnic groups, the gospel promotes a civilization of universal peace and love.

The content of the message is no less remarkable. It presents the image of Jesus, the incarnate Lord who speaks and acts with unprecedented authority, confounding his enemies but showing mercy to repentant sinners and compassion for the weak and the outcast. Rejected by his own, he willingly lays down his life. Praying for his executioners, he dies naked and abandoned on the Cross, only to be taken up into glory by the Father. The story of Jesus, vivid in its details and majestic in its pattern, surpasses human powers of invention. It is so captivating that some have taken it as evidence of its own truth.

The figure of Jesus is even more impressive when seen in the perspective of salvation history. He arrives on the scene at the conclusion of a thousand years of prophetic literature that looked forward in hope to the advent of a Redeemer. The faith aroused by Jesus has persisted for two thousand years, winning adherents of vast numbers from every land and nation. The Christian community continues to be a vital force in the world. In spite of the human weakness of her members, the Church is a sign, a sacrament filled with Christ's presence, an enduring witness to her own divine origin.

How, then, does an apologetics of committed religious testimony compare with other methods, such as the classical approach through natural theology and the evidential approach that appeals to scientific history? Testimony, as I have explained it, has an interpersonal character. The witness addresses us actively, placing us in the position of recipients who must seek to understand. Personal address can surprise and challenge us, furnish us with new categories, and thus dispose us for conversion. To the extent that we open ourselves up to testimony, we learn to rely on trustworthy witnesses and submit to their authority. This fiducial attitude prepares us for religious conversion as a personal submission to the divine witness who speaks to us in Christ.

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While I applaud the resurgence of apologetics that we have recently seen in this country, I suggest it could benefit from the kind of personalism that Pope John Paul II professes. I have for some years been advocating an apologetics of religious testimony. It could capitalize on the personalist categories with which Christian philosophers such as Gabriel Marcel have familiarized us: testimony, invitation, response, engagement, fidelity, and communion. These categories attune us to biblical thinking and especially to the Gospels as documents of faith.

The apologetics of personal testimony is particularly suited to the genius of Catholicism. In the act of Catholic faith, reliance on testimony goes out indivisibly to Christ and to the Church through which he continues his mission in the world. Such testimony invites us not only to individual conversion but to communion with the whole body of believers.

Recent popes have been calling the Catholic Church to a new evangelization. To evangelize, we must allow the testimony of God, of the apostles, and of the Church to speak through us. This we cannot do with confidence and success unless we have assured ourselves that the testimony is credible and unless we are able to convince others that this is the case. Holy Scripture instructs us not to neglect apologetics. "Always be prepared," says the First Letter of Peter, "to give a defense (*apologian*) of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). If we love Christ and cherish our faith, and if we wish to spread its saving influence, we will not shirk this important responsibility. The time is ripe, the need is urgent, for a rebirth of apologetics. FT

Olber's Paradox

The heavens hold more stars than earth has grains
Of sand, and given time, each tiny sun
Combined should make a world where starlight stains
The sky bright white and dark would be undone.
And yet the night remains. The dim stars gleam
Their separate ways, and constellations drawn
Connect their dots, while under them we dream
And sleep, then wake to such a thing as dawn.
The universe, expanding since its birth,
Is larger, older than its light; sublime,
The force that keeps this constant day from earth—
The same that measures out our years—is time:
The limitation that provides us night
And saves us all from unremitting light.

Robert W. Crawford

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How Richard Rorty Found Religion

Jason Boffetti

Richard Rorty's aversion to traditional religion and religious belief is well known. In 2000, for example, he told a packed house of students and former colleagues at the University of Virginia that he was a "militant secularist" and that the Enlightenment was "right to suggest that religion is something that the human species would be better if it could outgrow." It was Diderot, Rorty reminded them, who said that "the last king should be strangled with the entrails of the last priest" and "even though some of my best friends are priests, I feel some sympathy with all these critics of religious institutions."

But in recent books and essays Rorty has expressed the hope that "romantic polytheism" will come to serve as America's new religious center. Rorty says that he now agrees with his sometime critic, Michael Sandel, who wrote in *Democracy's Discontents* that it may never be possible to separate morality and religion entirely, since doing so often "generates its own disenchantment." Rather, liberal societies must admit that, according to Rorty's reading of John Rawls, they create "new moralities and new religions." Despite predicting in his earlier writings that religion would one day wither away, Rorty now proposes a new public religious faith.

His religious turn became an open possibility as far back as the 1970s, when he forsook rationalistic analytic philosophy for neopragmatism. Rorty has come to realize that what pragmatists like himself and John Dewey offer is a vision for public life in which democracy itself serves as "a metaphysic of the relation of man and his experience in nature." By so defining democracy, pragmatists offer something that satisfies Paul Tillich's definition of a religion as that which we designate as our "symbol of ultimate concern." And Rorty admits that his own philosophical purposes are "ultimately spiritual," since "the adoption of my view would be a real change in people's self-image."

Following his pragmatist mentor John Dewey, Rorty believes that we might usefully substitute faith in human potential for retrograde faith in a benevolent God. In the essay "Religious Faith, Intellectual Responsibility, and Romance," Rorty criticizes the other American pragmatist luminary, William James, for getting stuck in what Dewey called the "second stage" of religious consciousness. James still believed that aligning ourselves with "a power that is not ourselves will do unimaginably vast good." Rorty wishes that James had reached the "third stage" of religious consciousness, in which humans put their "faith in the future possibilities of moral humans, a faith which is hard to distinguish from love for, and hope for, the human community. I shall call this fuzzy overlap of faith, hope, and love 'romance.'" (He also calls it "social hope," "solidarity," and "a religion of democracy.")

Neopragmatists of a Rortian stripe (not to be confused with the Jamesian sort) offer what amounts to an alternative picture of man and his place in the universe—one that, as Rorty has lately begun to acknowledge, does resemble religious faith, as it fills

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the void of meaning that relation with "God" or "Truth" once filled. Rorty has known the call of intense and ultimately spiritual yearnings. From his teenage years on, Rorty has sought a way to reconcile a yearning for the transcendent and sublime with a desire for human solidarity. With his recent discovery of romantic polytheism, he has finally found a way to satisfy this longing.

At many stages of his life, Rorty has toyed with the idea that belief in a transcendent God might serve to bring one's private loves and public virtues into harmony. Most of Rorty's reflections on his early disenchantment with and rejection of both traditional philosophy and religion appear in his 1992 essay "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids."

His parents, he writes, were journalists who worked for the Worker's Defense League and who raised him to believe that all "decent people" were socialists and that "the point of being human was to spend one's life fighting social injustice." He was taught to regard the two red-bound volumes of the Dewey Commission of Inquiry into the Moscow Trials, *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, and *Not Guilty*, "in the way which other children thought of their family's Bible: they were books that radiated redemptive truth and moral splendor."

But Rorty harbored boyish, "private, weird, snobbish, incommunicable interests" that he felt were at odds with his parents' concern with this-worldly social justice. He was fascinated by North American wild orchids, which he deemed "morally superior to the showy, hybridized, tropical orchids displayed in florists' shops"; he considered them "noble," "pure," and "chaste," but he always felt slightly uneasy about his interest in these "socially useless flowers." His love for the wild orchid serves as a symbol for his lifelong desire for intellectual purity and singular devotion to something transcendent.

In his college years, Rorty devoted himself to finding a "single vision" that would bring his yearnings for social justice and his private, idiosyncratic loves together. "I wanted to find some intellectual or aesthetic framework which would let me—in a thrilling phrase which I came across in Yeats—'hold reality and justice in a single vision.'" He aspired to be "an intellectual and spiritual snob and a friend of humanity—nerdy recluse and a fighter for justice."

Rorty broke from his parent's conscientious Leninism (they denounced Stalin's Russia) after he matriculated as a precocious fifteen-year-old at the University of Chicago and immediately fell under the tutelage of Mortimer Adler and Robert Hutchins. They taught him that the only way to refute both a Nazi and a Stalinist was to defend democracy as "something eternal, absolute, and good." He was immediately seduced by their Platonic promises, not least because he thought their approach to philosophy seemed to leave room for the love of pure beauty.

Still, Rorty felt that there was at least one unexplored option: religious faith rather than philosophical knowledge. He describes this decision as choosing between Dostoevsky's Karamazov brothers: Would he become a pious Alyosha (whom Rorty says he alternately envied and despised) or a rational Ivan? Having read T. S. Eliot, he was attracted by the idea that "only committed Christians (and perhaps only Anglo-Catholics) could overcome their unhealthy preoccupations with their private obsessions, and so serve their fellow humans with proper humility." But in the end, he could not become an Alyosha, Rorty writes, because of a "prideful inability to believe what I was saying when I recited the General Confession." Platonism appealed to Rorty because it "had all the advantages of religion, without requiring the humility which Christianity demanded, and of which I was apparently incapable."

But Platonism proved just as unsatisfying. Rorty could not decide whether Platonism was aimed at "private bliss" or at "irrefutable argument." As a potential Ivan, Rorty knew that he had a knack for disputation that allowed him to wriggle out of circular arguments and dialectical corners, but he could not help fearing that, although he was learning the skills of argument, he was not becoming "either wise or virtuous." In fact, he had yet to find anything like an irrefutable truth (or even a coherent one for that matter). He began to suspect, to his distress, that there was no ground of rational certainty for his Platonic faith to rest on. Philosophy seemed to do nothing but help one get out of linguistic dead ends; it could not set one entirely free. Becoming an Ivan seemed to offer no long-term payoff.

By the time he left the University of Chicago to attend Yale for his doctoral studies, Rorty had begun a forty-year period of disillusionment, "looking for a coherent and convincing way of formulating my worries about what, if anything, philosophy was good for." For most of those forty years, no one knew that he was disillusioned; he was a well-regarded analytic philosopher, employable and widely published.

When he wrote the introductory essay to his book *The Linguistic Turn* (1967), he still had some small hope that the right approach might resolve the perennial philosophical questions. The promise of analytic philosophy and its linguistic turn was that "philosophical problems . . . may be solved (or dissolved) either by reforming language, or by understanding more about the language we presently use." If we can create an ideal

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and logical language for philosophy, one without the confused concepts embedded in much philosophical language, philosophy might be put on surer footing.

But even before *The Linguistic Turn* was published, Rorty saw that no foundation was less problematic than any other. Around 1970, Rorty went into a deep "clinical depression" and found himself unable to write for more than a year. Although he has not written openly about his dark night of the soul, it led to his very public break with mainstream analytic philosophy and his subsequent conversion to American pragmatism.

During a five-year period following his breakdown, Rorty devoured the works of the great pragmatists—James, Dewey, and Sydney Hook. Their work led him to conclude that both analytic philosophy and the linguistic turn were nothing more than the "last refuge" of representationalism. What was needed was a "cosmological" turn, much like the transition from a "Ptolemaic-Aristotelian cosmology to a Copernican-Newtonian one." The pragmatists—a philosophical school that Rorty believes includes not only Dewey and James, but also the "proto-pragmatist" Friedrich Nietzsche—had already effected that cosmological turn, but few had noticed. Philosophy's most vexing problems, they taught, can never be solved; they can only be dissolved. Pragmatism would serve for him as an antidote to both the hubris of analytic philosophy and, ultimately, the circularity of postmodernism.

His pragmatic formation can best be understood as an alternative to religious conversion. Rorty reports that at the age of twenty, "I desperately wanted to be a Platonist—to become one with the One, to fuse myself with Christ or God or the Platonic form of the Good or something like that. Pragmatism was a reaction formation." Pragmatism would have to fill the hole left by religion and his quest for certainty. Analytic philosophy had been his last-ditch effort at realizing a single vision. Through it, Rorty had hoped to find convincing arguments for a unified account of the universe. But he came to realize that his earliest quest to hold reality and justice in a single vision "had been a mistake—that the pursuit of such a vision had been precisely what led Plato astray."

Jürgen Habermas describes Rorty's pragmatic turn as the behavior of a "spurned lover"; his desire to "do away with all philosophy seems to spring more from the melancholy of a disappointed metaphysician, driven on by nominalist spurs, than from the self-criticism of an enlightened analytic philosopher who wishes to complete the linguistic turn in a pragmatic way." Fellow pragmatist Richard Bernstein concurs: "So much of his recent writing [as of 1987] falls into a genre of the 'God that failed' discourse. There seems to be something almost oedipal—a form of patricide—in Rorty's obsessive attacks on father figures in philosophy and metaphysics. It is the discourse of a one-time 'true believer' who has lost his faith."

Having abandoned his first quest, Rorty devoted himself to becoming another kind of crusader, one who would work—as a professor, a prolific writer, and even the president of the American Philosophical Association—to redirect the philosophy profession away from the search for a single vision that could orient his life and his philosophy.

In the 1980s, Rorty recognized that the way of theistic faith was still open to him but concluded, once again, that religious conversion was out of the question because only religion with a

> nonargumentative faith in a surrogate parent who, unlike any real parent, embodied love, power, and justice in equal measure—could do the trick Plato wanted done. Since I couldn't imagine becoming religious, and indeed had gotten more and more raucously secularist, I decided that the hope of getting a single vision by becoming a philosopher had been a self-deceptive atheist's way out. So I decided to write a book about what intellectual life might be like if one could manage to give up the Platonic attempt to hold reality and justice in a single vision.

That book was *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989). It was Rorty's attempt to show that, unless we are "lucky Christians" who effortlessly join love of God with love of neighbor, or are revolutionaries passionately devoted to social justice, our moral responsibility to others and our private and idiosyncratic loves "need not coincide, and one should not try too hard to make them do so." If, unable to accept our finitude, we try to combine them, we will tend, once persuasion fails, to force our idiosyncratic loves on others.

Rorty would make one last fateful choice for the future direction of his political philosophy. He would follow Dewey and the American pragmatists in defending liberal democracy, rather than joining what Rorty calls the "bad side" of Nietzsche and of contemporary postmodernists who attacked it. But in his zeal to embrace American pragmatism and democracy, Rorty has adopted—perhaps inadvertently at first, but now more intentionally—a new religious faith that gives him the unified picture of the universe he has always longed for. Rorty has come to accept that all competing worldviews are ultimately competing commitments to some orienting faith, and that no conflict

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between worldviews can be resolved by an appeal to reason or objective standards of truth. At their core, all worldviews require faith and hope.

The culmination of this line of thinking occurred only last year in the pages of the *Journal of Religious Ethics*. Rorty issued a long overdue *mea culpa* for past diatribes against Stephen Carter's frequent defense of the religious voice in the public square. Having read an essay by Nicholas Wolterstorff, as well as Jeffrey Stout's *Democracy and Tradition* (2003), Rorty admits that his early response to Carter was "hasty and insufficiently thoughtful." Since his own worldview is simply one of many competing faith-systems, none of which have any better claim on objectivity than another, Rorty's chief dispute with Carter now is that he wants Carter and his Christian coreligionists to lose and his own religious faith to win out as the culturally and politically dominant worldview.

The broad outlines of Rorty's return to religious faith can be found in the 1999 book *Achieving Our Country*, as well as in the essays "Pragmatism as Romantic Polytheism" and "Religious Faith, Intellectual Responsibility, and Romance."

In these works, Rorty describes a uniquely American faith, whose adherents, he writes, have included Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Abraham Lincoln. Sometimes Rorty calls this American faith a "religion of democracy" and at other times "romantic polytheism." But both concepts bring together into a single vision his strong sense of "social justice" and an appreciation for the sublime and the mystical.

This idea of romantic polytheism is not a wholesale rejection of his arguments in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, in which he claimed that one's private projects of self-creation cannot harmonize and should not be made to harmonize with common public purposes. But romantic polytheism holds out the promise that this supposedly unacceptable fusion between public and private projects might be carried out without negative social consequences.

Rorty offers social solidarity that can take the place of a "communion of saints" in the form of a democratic community, "a community in which everybody thinks that it is human solidarity, rather than knowledge of something not merely human, that really matters. The actually existing approximations to such a fully democratic, fully secular community now seem to me the greatest achievements of our species." In exchange for giving up religion's promise of reconciliation with Truth or God, pragmatists-as-romantic-polytheists are energized toward social action in their existing, temporal, human community.

Rorty believes that we in the West are all polytheists now because we think that there are various goods and no overarching good. He chooses this term "polytheism" carefully—and not altogether ironically—because he believes that the idea can bring together John Stuart Mill, Friedrich Nietzsche, and William James in the belief that "there is no actual or possible object of knowledge that would permit you to commensurate and rank all human needs." If gods and goods are plural and serve different people in different ways, why should we feel the need to rank them? In fact, it may be the pursuit of such divergent human ends that benefits us all in the long run. Hence "romantic utilitarians" and pragmatists like Rorty "will probably drop the idea of diverse immortal persons, such as Olympian deities, but . . . will retain the idea that there are diverse, conflicting, but equally valuable forms of life." The term "romantic," then, serves for Rorty as a more evocative term than "secular," since it suggests that atheists might speak just as inspirationally about their faith in human potentiality as theists speak about the movement of God in history.

Rorty denies that a culture of romantic polytheism has no room for conscientious monotheists. It's just that a "pragmatic theist"—whom Rorty defines as a theist who wants to make his private religious beliefs publicly relevant—must be willing to "get along without personal immortality, providential interventions, the efficacy of sacraments, the Virgin Birth, the Risen Christ, the Covenant of Abraham, the authority of the Koran, and a lot of other things which many theists are loath to do without." The price for public relevance comes, for Rorty anyway, at the cost of monotheism's most miraculous, particularistic, and, in Rorty's view, implausible beliefs.

Of course, Rorty admits that someone like an Alasdair McIntyre would deplore the idea of a "demythologized Christianity" because it would "drain all of the point out of religion." But Rorty believes that the advantages of a vague theism outweigh the losses. Furthermore, viable examples of this vague and pragmatist sort of theism already exist. Rorty writes that "a pragmatist philosophy of religion must follow [Paul] Tillich. . . . Liberal Protestants, to whom Tillich sounds plausible, are quite willing to talk about their faith in God, but demur at spelling out just what beliefs that faith includes." They must learn to "get along without creeds" but instead hold the kinds of beliefs that "make the sort of difference to a human life which is made by the presence or absence of love." If the doctrines of Rorty's own "romantic polytheism" seem equally fuzzy, his sources for spiritual inspiration are far more concrete.

In addition to this non-creedal creed, Rorty suggests for his new religion a nonscriptural canon, arguing that

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poetry and literature might adequately serve as sacred texts for pragmatists, atheists, polytheists, and secularists. In *Philosophy as Social Hope*, Rorty quotes approvingly from Dorothy Allison, who writes in "Believing in Literature" that literature "has shaped my own system of belief—a kind of atheist's religion. . . . [T]he backbone of my conviction has been a belief in the progress of human society demonstrated in its fiction." Like Allison, Rorty claims that literature sustains his "atheist's faith."

But poetry and literature do more than provide consolation for the atheist's soul; they transform it, reshaping beliefs and motivations. In "The Inspirational Value of Great Works of Literature," the last chapter of *Achieving Our Country*, Rorty writes that literature "must be allowed to recontextualize much of what you previously thought you knew." But he finds that in this post-Nietzschean, post-philosophical culture, many of the older literary texts are simply obsolete (Plato's dialogues and sacred Scripture, for example) because they no longer serve to transform us; we are a different sort of people in the twenty-first century than the ones those texts appealed to. Claiming as allies thinkers such as Dorothy Allison, Harold Bloom, and Matthew Arnold, Rorty writes that we should "hope for a religion of literature, in which works of the secular imagination replace Scripture as the principal source of inspiration and hope for each new generation. We should cheerfully admit that canons are temporary, and touchstones replaceable."

The novels of Marcel Proust and Henry James are strong candidates for inclusion in Rorty's canon. James' novels, for instance, teach us to appreciate "the other" and thus to build social solidarity that can substitute for a traditional religious text. Rorty writes that the term "'spiritual development' is usually used only in reference to the attempt to get in touch with the divine. But it is occasionally used in the broader sense, one in which it covers any attempt to transform oneself into a better sort of person by changing one's sense of what matters most. In the broader sense of the term, I would urge that the novels of Proust and James help us achieve spiritual growth."

It is clear that this secular, poetic, and novelistic canon is part of what makes Rorty's own polytheism romantic instead of literal. He writes in "Pragmatism as Romantic Polytheism" that "the substitution of poetry for religion as a source of useful ideals . . . seems to me usefully described as a return to polytheism." And in modern secular democracies "poetry should take over the role that religion has played in the formation of individual human lives."

But Rorty goes even further in replacing sacred texts with literature and poetry. Poets will serve to fill the vacancy left by priests. Although at one point Rorty writes that romantic polytheism has no need of priests or "priest-substitutes . . . who purport to tell you how things *really* are," he writes at another point that poets will be "to a secularized polytheism what the priests of a universal church are to monotheism."

This idea of "poet as priest" squares with the many laudatory things that Rorty has to say throughout his writing about the role of Bloom's "strong poets." Since *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), Rorty has written that poets have always played and will continue to play a powerful role in contemporary society, because in shaping the languages we speak, the questions we ask, and the kinds of problems we think are worth solving, they determine the kind of people we become.

If we see history as the triumph of "successive metaphors," then, Rorty writes, we should see "the poet, in the generic sense of the maker of the new words, the shaper of new languages, as the vanguard of the species." Just as Rorty cannot ultimately dispense with either canon or priestcraft, so he cannot quite bring himself to do away with churches either. While insisting that he is profoundly anticlerical and anti-ecclesiastical, Rorty envisions a future America with quasi-churches serving a national religion of romantic polytheism. Rorty recommends at least three kinds of denominations that may serve to propagate romantic polytheism and form a temporal communion of saints: churches committed to the social gospel; the university; and the fraternal community of American democracy itself.

Rorty has devised something like a test of orthodoxy for churches in his postphilosophical and pragmatic America: "If a religious community has gay clergy and solemnizes gay marriage, it belongs to the constructive minority. If it preaches the social gospel, if the preachers remind the congregation that the richest country in the world at the richest point in its economic history still doesn't feed its poor, then it also qualifies." But the vast majority of Christian churches fail the test because they have kept "sex prominent in discussions of morality. It is hard to forgive them for this." Rorty thinks that churches should teach that the greatest source of suffering is still, as always, economic inequality, not spiritual or bodily impurity.

Rorty evidently has a soft spot for the late nineteenth-century liberal Christianity that included the Social Gospel of his maternal grandfather, Walter Rauschenbusch. Rorty believes that the Social Gospel teaches that "we should read the New Testament as saying that how we treat each other on earth matters a

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great deal more than the outcome of debates concerning the existence or nature of another world." So confident is Rorty of liberal Christianity's ultimate revival that he predicts in his essay "Looking Backwards from the Year 2096"—a short work of speculative fiction—that social gospel churches will cooperate with the "Democratic Vistas Party" to topple a military dictatorship and restore to American political life its focus on fraternity and economic equality.

In Rorty's utopian future America, there will be "church" options for cynics, atheists, and realists. While Rorty writes less directly on this point, it would be in keeping with much of what he writes about American higher education if academia itself was a kind of surrogate church for those not theistically inclined. In the 1960s, the American left began to transform the academy into the kind of social institution that does the work once done by churches: they instill social-cooperative values, tell stories that provide meaning to life, and even grant a kind of citizenship status (not unlike what baptism confers on Christians) through that increasingly obligatory rite of passage, the four-year college experience.

In several of his writings, Rorty describes the role of college professors in almost fundamentalist terms: professors should see their work in the classroom as nothing less than an exercise in conversion. They ought "to arrange things so that students who enter as bigoted, homophobic, religious fundamentalists will leave college with views more like our own." With no hint of his usual irony, Rorty writes that "students are lucky to find themselves under the benevolent *Herrschaft* of people like me, and to have escaped the grip of their frightening, vicious, dangerous parents." Parents, he writes, ought to be forewarned that "we are going to go right on trying to discredit you in the eyes of your children, trying to strip your fundamentalist religious community of dignity, trying to make your views seem silly rather than discussable." Although Rorty is on record as agreeing with Judith Shklar that liberalism means that "cruelty is the worst thing we do" and that the "redescription" of another's most central beliefs is about the worst form of cruelty imaginable, he seems willing enough to visit such cruelty on college students who happen to wander into his classroom.

If American colleges and universities are catechism classes for young Americans, then American democracy itself serves as a kind of substitute church (albeit a large and diverse one) for Rorty, who claims to long for some human community and an opportunity for solidarity in the absence of transcendent and mystical communion, and who offers us such solidarity in a return to civil religion in the tradition of Rousseau but in the language of Whitman and Lincoln.

Although most contemporary leftists believe that "American civil religion is narrow-minded and obsolete nationalism," Rorty admits in *Achieving Our Country* that his favorite American writers—John Dewey and Walt Whitman—embrace it. Rorty is their willing disciple because he recognizes that an American civil religion can tie American history to his liberal hopes and hallowed democratic institutions.

He calls its "thoroughgoing secularism" the "most striking" feature of American civil religion, dispensing with theism altogether and replacing devotion to God with devotion to one's fellow man. At its best, American civil religion enshrines solidarity as its defining public virtue rather than holiness. Dewey and Whitman thought we could "take pride in what America might, all by itself and by its own lights, make of itself, rather than in America's obedience to any authority—even the authority of God." Rather than being curious about God, we should be curious about one another. And Dewey and Whitman

> dreamed that Americans would break the traditional link between the religious impulse, the impulse to stand in awe of something greater than oneself, and the infantile need for security, the childish hope of escaping from time and chance. . . . They wanted that utopian America to replace God as the unconditional object of desire. They wanted the struggle for social justice to be the country's animating principle, the nation's soul.

Rorty writes that a civil religion of democracy, if we take Dewey and Whitman as guides, emphasizes the relations among men and not between ourselves and God (or the gods). Dewey and Whitman thus "hoped to separate the fraternity and loving kindness urged by the Christian Scriptures from the idea of supernatural parentage, immorality, providence, and—most important—sin." Moreover, this civil religion is centered on this world rather than oriented to heaven. Whitman, for example, hoped that each American would learn to "substitute his own nation-state for the Kingdom of God." American democracy is an experiment in "national self-creation: the first nation-state with nobody but itself to please—not even God. We are the greatest poem because we put ourselves in the place of God: our essence is our existence, and our existence is in the future. Other nations thought of themselves as hymns to the glory of God. We redefine God as our future selves."

As Dewey writes, "Democracy is neither a form of

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government nor a social expediency, but a metaphysic of the relation of man and his experience in nature." Democracy corrects for the mistakes of Plato and the Christians who tried to identify "the ultimate object of *eros* with something unique, atemporal, and nonhuman rather than with an indefinitely expansible pantheon of transitory temporal accomplishments, both natural and cultural." The deeper meaning of democracy is that we are alone in the universe and have only one another as reference points for truth and meaning.

Rorty is convinced that such an inexorable transition from traditional monotheism to this secular civil religion is already under way: "I think that the religion of love has gradually moved out of the churches and into the political arena. That religion is in the process of being transfigured into democratic politics. What is left in the churches is the fear that human beings may not be able to save themselves without help—that social cooperation is not enough." Rorty hopes that the American civil religion of democracy will be enough for most people, so that those left over will be an inconsequential minority.

So there is Rorty's romantic polytheism, the long-sought joining of his youthful spiritual yearnings and his later philosophical refinements. For all of its profound optimism about the human future, Rorty's religious turn has a dark side, at least at the level of political philosophy. In his earlier writings, especially *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Rorty was careful to keep the spheres of public and private separate. For example, in the 1984 essay "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy," Rorty praises the genius of democratic liberalism because it insists that we keep our metaphysics to ourselves. In so doing, we are left with a public square free from the irresolvable conflict of worldviews that can make political agreement impossible at the level of premises and foundations. And official religion, no less than civil religion, is out of bounds because government simply has no reason or capacity to take sides on such matters of conscience.

Whether or not one agrees with the earlier Rorty that metaphysics can be dispensed with entirely in the political sphere, the later Rorty has clearly brought metaphysics back into public discussion. He insists on a "fact of the matter" about the nature of our universe and our place in it—that there is no God and that all we have is one another—and he seeks to establish, in patently religious terms, a public-spiritedness that comports with this "fact."

In short, Rorty proposes to unify the public and private spheres under a metaphysical notion. The clear implication of Rorty's religious turn is that when orthodox theism conflicts with the American civil religion of democracy, traditional religious belief must yield or risk public disapproval and a range of possible, though as yet unnamed, threats.

Of course, this attempt at civil religion will not prevail without a fight from its nearest competitors. Orthodox monotheists (Jews, Christians, and Muslims) are unlikely to become champions of public polytheism. Nor will they be eager to strip their beliefs down to the most "pragmatic portions" in order to gain the pragmatist seal of approval.

It is disconcerting to find that one of the country's most prominent academic critics of fundamentalism has invented for himself a new kind of quasi-religious zealotry. Haunted for his entire career by faiths he could not bring himself to accept, Rorty has finally managed to become the true believer he has always longed to be. It remains to be seen whether those who do not share his newfound faith will eventually suffer at the hands of his most enthusiastic coreligionists. FT

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World Order: What Catholics Forgot

George Weigel

It is no secret that late 2002 and early 2003—the months just before an American-led coalition deposed the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq—were a difficult moment in the dialogue between the Holy See and the United States government, and between the leaders of the Church in Rome and many Catholics in the United States. There were several reasons for these difficulties, and it is not my purpose here to analyze them in detail. What I would like to explore, however, is the idea that this difficult period was itself a by-product of a forty-year "time of forgetting"—a forgetting of the distinctive way Catholics have thought about world politics for centuries. Since the days of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, it has been understood that Catholics bring more than a sensibility to the debate over world affairs; Catholics bring ideas, and those ideas are organized in a distinctive way that leads to distinctive insights and a distinctive method of moral analysis. That, I suggest, is what has been forgotten. Moreover, my further suggestion is that a wiser conversation—within Catholicism in the United States, within the U.S. government, between Americans and Rome—could result from retrieving and renewing what was once called "Catholic international relations theory."

Retrieval precedes renewal. So what is that distinctive tradition of moral reflection about the politics of nations? Catholic international relations theory was first forged by Augustine in *De Civitate Dei*, and by Aquinas in his commentaries on ethics and politics, the *De Regimine Principum* and the relevant sections of the *Summa Theologiae*. It was refined by theologians such as Francisco de Vitoria and Francisco Suárez in the Counter-Reformation period. It was further developed by the twentieth-century papal magisterium during the pontificates of Pius XII and John XXIII. Needless to say, the world changed a great deal from Augustine to the mid-twentieth century. Yet from Augustine to John XXIII, this distinctive Catholic way of thinking about world politics displayed certain consistent features. It was a tradition of moral realism, built around three key insights.

First, the Catholic tradition insisted that politics is an arena of rationality and moral responsibility. Unlike those theories of international relations which insisted that world politics is amoral or immoral, classic Catholic thinking about international relations taught that every human activity, including politics, takes place within the horizon of moral judgment, precisely because politics is a human activity and moral judgment is a defining characteristic of the human person. That is true of politics among nations, the Catholic tradition insisted, even if there are distinctive aspects to the moral dimension of world politics.

This basic stance toward politics was itself built on more fundamental Catholic moral-theological convictions: that mankind is not "totally depraved," as some Reformation traditions taught; that society is a natural reality; that governance has a positive, not merely puni-

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tive or coercive, function; that political community is a good in its own right, an expression of the sociability that is part of the God-given texture of the human condition. Politics, the Catholic tradition of moral realism insisted, always engages questions of virtue, questions of how we ought to live together.

Second, the Catholic tradition taught a classic understanding of power: power is the capacity to achieve a corporate purpose for the common good. Power is not to be reduced, or traduced, to violence; on the contrary, violence is a limit-case testing the boundaries of a rational and ethical politics. Power thus has a positive dimension; its proper exercise is a form of human creativity. Power is also related to governance. Political communities exist to achieve common purposes—that is, to exercise power. Absent power, there is anarchy. Thus the Catholic question was never, should power be exercised? Rather, the Catholic question was, how is power to be exercised? To what ends, by what authority, through what means? Power, in this understanding, is not the antinomy of peace (which is one of the goods to be sought by public authority); power, rightly understood, is a means to the achievement of the good of peace.

Third, the Catholic tradition had a distinctive understanding of peace. The peace to be sought in the politics of nations was not the interior peace that only comes to the individual through a right relationship with God. Nor was the peace to be sought in the politics of nations the eschatological peace of a conflict-free world, which Catholic moral realism deemed a utopian fantasy. Catholic moral realism understood that the biblical peace of the shalom kingdom envisioned in Isaiah 2:2-4 cannot be built by human effort in this world. Something else could be built, however—the peace of political community, in which order, law, freedom, and just structures of governance advance the common good in ways that lead communities toward that *caritas* that is their most proper and noble end.

This Catholic tradition of moral realism had a considerable, if often unremarked, effect on the evolution of world politics in the modern period. It was the foundation on which the Dutch Protestant Hugo Grotius based his seventeenth-century reflections on what he termed the "community of nations," his early attempts to apply the category of "law" to world politics, and his development of just war thinking. If Grotius is the "father of international law," and thus the father of today's international system, then the grandfather of that system is the moderate realism of Catholic international relations theory.

As might be expected from a tradition that defined peace as "the tranquillity of order," Catholic international relations theory in the mid-twentieth century stressed international legal and political institutions as a remedy for the threat of modern war and as the natural evolution of human political development. The high point of this line of thought came in 1963, with John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. There, the Pope taught that the "universal common good" required the development of a universal public authority. John XXIII was not a world federalist. He did not specify the structure of the universal public authority for which he called, and he did not discuss in any detail the relationship of that authority to existing nation-states. Rather, he pointed out that, as there were obviously certain grave problems on the global agenda that could only be addressed on a global basis, there ought to be some form of legal-political entity capable of resolving global questions in a global way. Pope John was careful to stress that the universal public authority he envisioned must operate according to the principle of subsidiarity (i.e., not drawing into itself all political authority but respecting the legitimate prerogatives of "lower" forms of public authority and the free associations of civil society) and must take as one of its primary objectives the defense of human rights. Forty years after *Pacem in Terris*, the encyclical's stress on the imperative of public authority at the global level seems to have been given concrete diplomatic effect in the diplomacy of the Holy See and in commentary by officials of the Holy See on world politics and international conflict.

At the theoretical level, however, Catholic international relations theory entered a fallow period in the years immediately following *Pacem in Terris*. If you have just encountered the phrase "Catholic international relations theory" for the first time in your life, that might suggest how infrequently the term has been employed in the past two generations. That there is a distinctively Catholic way of thinking about world politics, rooted in the distinctive understandings that ground Catholic social ethics, has not been a dominant theme among Catholic moral theologians and international relations specialists since the mid- to late-1960s.

This is troubling in many ways, not least because there have been two important developments in the Catholic Church's interaction with world politics during the pontificate of John Paul II that call for a development of Catholic international relations theory—and precisely at the level of theory.

Taking up an insight of John XXIII, John Paul II has insisted for a quarter of a century now that human rights are the moral core of the "universal common good" and that religious freedom is the first of these human rights

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to which the institutions of international public life must attend. This theme is both a fruit of the Second Vatican Council and an expression of John Paul II's own experience with totalitarian regimes. To insist that religious freedom is the first of human rights and that international legal and political institutions must defend and promote it is not, for John Paul, a matter of institutional special pleading. Rather, it is a function of the Pope's teaching that all thinking about society, even international society, must begin with an adequate philosophical anthropology, which recognizes in the human quest for transcendent truth and love the defining characteristic of our humanity.

The second development in this pontificate has been the emergence of the Office of Peter—the papacy—as an office of global moral witness with real effect within and among nation-states. The most obvious example of this, of course, was the Pope's pivotal role in the collapse of European communism. By igniting a revolution of conscience in Poland in June 1979, John Paul II had a decisive impact on shaping the nonviolent politics that eventually produced the revolution of 1989 in east-central Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. But other examples could be adduced, including the Pope's tacit support for the People Power revolution in the Philippines that displaced the Marcos regime; the Pope's role in supporting democratic transitions in Latin America, with special reference to El Salvador, Nicaragua, Chile, and Argentina; and the Pope's role in arousing an effective international opposition to the Clinton administration's efforts to have abortion-on-demand declared a fundamental human right at the 1994 Cairo World Conference on Population and Development.

The emergence of the pope, the holder of the world's oldest institutional office, as a global moral witness is an intriguing phenomenon in its own right. It becomes even more interesting when another aspect of the situation comes into focus. For while John Paul II was taking moral arguments directly to the people of individual states and to the people of the world, going "around" or "beyond" their governments or the relevant international organizations, the diplomacy of the Holy See (which now enjoys full diplomatic relations with more than 170 states as well as Permanent Observer status at the UN and diplomatic representation at the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Organization of American States) has continued to function through the normal channels of bilateral relations and multilateral institutions. Is there a tension here? I think so.

John Paul II has been a moral witness speaking truth to power in world politics; his diplomatic representatives, by definition, must be "players" according to the established rules of the game. Sometimes those roles can get confused. Some would argue that this happened during the debate prior to the recent Iraq War, when the prudential judgments of Vatican diplomats and agency heads were often reported (and perceived) as if they were decisive moral judgments by the man the world has come to recognize as its foremost moral authority—Pope John Paul II. Then there is the question of how the Holy See, which is not a state, is to function in international fora in which every other actor of consequence is a state. How is it possible for the Holy See to function like a state without being a state and without damaging the Catholic Church's moral witness? To take one pressing issue here: Can the Holy See, without damaging the moral witness of the Catholic Church, form practical alliances for purposes of defending the family and the inalienable right to life with Muslim states whose policy and practice deny what the Catholic Church claims is the moral core of the universal common good—religious freedom?

This tension between the moral witness of the pope and the Church and the diplomacy of the Holy See is not likely to be resolved anytime soon—nor should it be prematurely resolved in either direction (i.e., by muting the moral witness of the Office of Peter, or by the Holy See's withdrawal from bilateral and multilateral diplomacy). At the present moment, when the Catholic Church is the world's premier institutional challenger to utilitarianism as the default position in international politics and in the understanding of the human person implicit in international organizations, the world needs the Church, working through the Holy See, to promote the dignity of the human person as the foundation of any worthy politics, including international politics. And if that means the Church must live with ambiguity and tension, then so be it. In the face of the Islamist threat (which only intensifies the temptation to create a naked international public square), the world also needs a demonstration that publicly assertive religion is not necessarily violent or aggressive religion; the Catholic Church, acting through the Holy See, is the only available candidate for making that demonstration at the global level. And, again, if that results in a certain tension and ambiguity, so be it.

But given this inevitable tension and ambiguity, it seems to me all the more urgent to reconvene a conversation that has lapsed for almost forty years—the conversation about the development of Catholic international relations theory. Its central insights into the nature of politics and public life remain true and are crucial in a debate often dominated by less noble (and

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indeed less true) conceptions of the human person, human community, human origins, and human destiny. Moreover, Catholic international relations theory, properly developed, would offer a dramatic alternative to what is now the other prominent religiously grounded moral "reading" of world politics, namely, militant Islam. Further, a developed Catholic international relations theory would represent an important challenge to the realpolitik that has corrupted Western European thinking about world politics and that is always a danger in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy.

In accordance with the instruction of the Second Vatican Council to read the "signs of the times," the development of Catholic international relations theory, while remaining faithful to the moral truths that are its foundation, must reckon with several current realities of international public life.

We no longer live in a world structured according to the political realities that prevailed at the end of the Second World War. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the world is no longer divided into two opposing ideological and military camps whose rivalry set the framework for much of international public life between 1945 and 1991. The preponderance of U.S. military, economic, and cultural power in the world is one facet of the new situation. Other relevant factors include the absolute and relative decline of Western European influence in the world; the emergence of China, India, and Japan as international actors with potentially global impact; the new influence of international economic and financial institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization; the impact of international nongovernmental organizations on the world political debate; the global communications revolution and the emergence of a "real-time" global politics; and the new assertiveness of religious conviction as a factor in the politics of nations. All of these must be taken into account in thinking through the development of Catholic international relations theory.

A developed Catholic international relations theory must also reckon with the enduring reality of the nation-state system. Despite the emergence of a plethora of international legal, political, and economic institutions, and the impact of nonstate actors on world affairs, the nation-state remains the basic organizing unit of world politics. That seems unlikely to change in the twenty-first century. The twenty-first-century world is not going to be structured according to pre-1914 patterns of empire; but neither is the twenty-first-century world going to evolve swiftly toward a post-nation-state structure in which international legal and political institutions are the dominant actors.

There are new actors in world politics with which a developed Catholic international relations theory must contend. I have already mentioned the impact of global financial and economic institutions and international nongovernmental organizations. But one must also wrestle here with the fact that other nonstate actors have become increasingly important in shaping politics among nations. Transnational terrorist organizations and networks are the most prominent, and lethal, examples of this phenomenon. Transnational criminal cartels—trafficking in human persons, for example—are another.

Catholic international relations theory must also wrestle with the unavoidable fact that existing international organizations are in a troubled state. Founded to save humanity from the scourge of war, the UN system has proven incapable of doing so, even as it has proven largely incapable of dealing with the new reality of aggressive nonstate actors (including terrorist organizations) and with the often-lethal reality of what are sometimes called "failed states" or "collapsing states." The twentieth-century Catholic commitment to the evolution of effective international legal and political organizations is not going to be reversed, nor should it be reversed in the twenty-first century. But that commitment must now be informed by a new sobriety about the failures of the UN and its affiliated agencies to deal with such post–Cold War crises as the Rwandan genocide, the collapse of Yugoslavia, the hijacking of Afghanistan by the Taliban, widespread famine in sub-Saharan Africa, the African AIDS pandemic, and the spread of SARS from China. Catholic international relations theory must, in other words, face squarely the moral and political failures of a UN system in which Libya can become chairman of the UN Human Rights Commission, in which Saddam Hussein's Iraq can be slated to chair a major international meeting on disarmament, in which the Security Council has become dysfunctional because its structure and procedures are incongruent with the realities it must address, and in which UN peacekeeping operations (as in Kosovo) too often serve to create new dependencies rather than functioning civil societies.

While a developed Catholic international relations theory for the twenty-first century must take account of the failures of the UN system, precisely in order to help create conditions for the possibility of reforming that system, it must also take account of the antidemocratic (and often anti-Catholic) bias in regional associations such as the European Union, and a new and dangerous form of judicial activism in international legal institutions. The latter is particularly troubling, as international courts or national courts claim-

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ing international jurisdiction have imitated activist U.S. appellate courts and have become vigorous contestants in an international culture war over such issues as the family, abortion, and human sexuality. A developed Catholic international relations theory must recognize that the world will not come into greater conformity with Catholic understandings of the universal common good, or with Catholic understandings of the peace of order, if the tyranny of unelected judges supplants the tyranny of some governments, or if democratically achieved agreements within countries are summarily abrogated by activist courts in other countries. The problem here is not simply theoretical; it can damage progress toward the peace of order within and among states. To cite one recent example: Nothing did more to enhance the reputation of Slobodan Milosevic and his political party in Serbia than his trial in The Hague by the International Court of Justice; a local war-crimes trial, run by his own people, would have been far more likely to produce both a just verdict and an outcome that would advance the cause of Serbian democracy.

Catholic international relations theory must also come to grips with the ideological bias at work in both international tribunals and national courts seeking an expanded international role. When a Spanish court overrides the democratically rendered judgment of the Chilean people by issuing an international arrest warrant for former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet (when he was in London for medical treatment), something is clearly awry; and that "something" is made worse by the fact that Spanish courts dismissed attempts to conduct similar proceedings against Fidel Castro. One suspects that something other than a newly discovered commitment to judicial restraint was at work in the latter case. (A parallel set of problems has emerged with attempts to subvert national laws on marriage, abortion, and euthanasia through the European Parliament.)

Read against the pattern of Catholic reflection on world politics noted at the outset, these "signs of the times" suggest certain priority issues for the intellectual development of Catholic international relations theory in these early years of the twenty-first century. Let me outline four of these priorities.

Priority one: Catholic international relations theory must develop a sophisticated understanding of the relationship of what Harvard political scientist Joseph Nye has termed "hard power" and "soft power" in the pursuit of the "peace of order" that is composed of freedom, justice, and security.

The accomplishments of "soft power" in recent decades have been impressive. The nonviolent revolution of 1989 in east-central Europe, which began with John Paul II's revolution of conscience in Poland, is the preeminent example, but one could also cite the democratic transformation of Latin America, the People Power revolution in the Philippines, and the democratic transitions in Taiwan and South Korea as further examples. The question to be pressed, though, is whether those experiences can be universalized.

The answer is almost certainly, "No." Take what is the cockpit of so much of world conflict today, the Middle East. Had the nascent state of Israel opted for a "soft power" approach to being invaded by several Arab states in 1948, the Jews would have been driven into the sea in a mass slaughter. Conversely, had the Palestinians opted for a "soft power" approach in 1967, at the end of the Six Day War, they would be preparing today to celebrate the thirtieth, or perhaps even the thirty-fifth, anniversary of independent Palestine. In the 1948 case, a "soft power" approach would have led to disaster; in 1967, it likely would have led to the dramatic amelioration of conflict. The effective deployment of "soft power" requires a certain context.

That was also true of the revolution of 1989. The nonviolent liberation of east-central Europe from communist control took place within a hard power context set by numerous factors, among them, Western rearmament during the 1980s. Absent that hard power context, it is unlikely that the revolution of 1989 would have happened when it did and how it did. Thus the question of how proportionate and discriminate "hard power" can set the context in which "soft power" can be effective requires careful study.

This, in turn, should prompt a more careful Catholic reflection on the relationship between the "force of law" and the "law of force," a trope that got considerable attention in the debate prior to the Iraq War of 2003, but perhaps without shedding as much light on the future as its proponents hoped. To juxtapose an undefined "law of force" over against the "force of law" in an absolute antinomy seems unsatisfactory, empirically and morally. All law, of whatever sort, ultimately requires the sanction of enforcement if "law" is to mean anything other than a vague expression of good intentions. This is a perennial feature of the human condition, it seems. Imagine, for example, a world ordered according to the vision of John XXIII in *Pacem in Terris*, a world in which effective, just, and democratically accountable international legal and political institutions for resolving international conflict were in place. Human nature being what it is, someone would undoubtedly breach the peace, and in some instances that breach of the peace (and that challenge to John XXIII's "universal public authority") would have to be met by the use of proportionate and discriminate armed force.

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Law is not self-vindicating or self-enforcing. Catholic international relations theory in the twenty-first century must take that into account in thinking through the relationship between "hard power" and "soft power," and between the rule of law and the use of armed force, in international public life.

Priority two: Both contemporary international law and much recent Catholic commentary seem to have come to the settled view that the first use of armed force is always bad, while the second use of armed force (in response to that always bad first use) may be morally justifiable. This is not, however, the classic Catholic view, and twenty-first-century Catholic international relations theory is going to have to think about these various uses of armed force in a more nuanced way. This, in turn, requires refining our understanding of "aggression" and refining the criteria by which the international community and individual states can judge, with moral legitimacy, that aggression is "underway."

Classic Catholic thinking about the morally legitimate deployment of armed force did not restrict legitimacy to second use. Thomas Aquinas, for example, did not begin his just war thinking with a "presumption against war" (as that phrase is currently understood in much Catholic debate). Indeed, St. Thomas believed that there were occasions when the first use of force is morally justified—for example, to punish systematic and organized wickedness, or to prevent innocents from coming to harm. Pondering these examples, one readily thinks of Pope John Paul II's address to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome in 1992, when he stressed the moral duty of "humanitarian intervention" in situations of an impending or ongoing genocide—but without specifying on whom that duty fell, or how it was to be fulfilled.

In any case, and with the recent Iraq War in mind, is it possible to begin to refine the criteria by which the first use of armed force would be morally justifiable because of a responsible judgment that aggression was indeed underway? During the Iraq War, the president of the American Society of International Law suggested that aggression could reasonably be said to be underway when three conditions had been met: when a state possessed weapons of mass destruction or exhibited clear and convincing evidence of intent to acquire weapons of mass destruction; when grave and systematic human rights abuses in the state in question demonstrated the absence of internal constraints on that state's international behavior; and when the state in question had demonstrated aggressive intent against others in the past. The author suggested that these three criteria set a high threshold for the first use of armed force in the face of aggression, while recognizing that there are risks too great to be countenanced by responsible statesmen. A revitalized Catholic international relations theory would engage this proposal, help to refine it, and indeed open a broader discussion that would include filling in the criteria by which the duty of humanitarian intervention is satisfied by the use of armed force when other remedies fail.

Priority three: As I mentioned in sketching the broad outlines of pre–Vatican II Catholic international relations theory, the popes of the mid-twentieth century, Pius XII and John XXIII, laid considerable emphasis on international legal and political institutions. Thus it should hardly be surprising that the Holy See has been among the most consistent supporters of the United Nations. What is perhaps surprising is that this support has intensified in the past two decades, even as the UN and its affiliated agencies have adopted policies with respect to abortion, the family, and the proper response to the AIDS pandemic in Africa that are opposed to the moral teaching of the Catholic Church and the policy preferences of the Holy See. In the debate prior to the Iraq War, for example, at least one senior official of the Holy See insisted that only the United Nations, through the Security Council, can legally authorize and morally legitimize the use of armed force in the pursuit of peace, security, and order. And while that statement does not constitute the authoritative teaching of the Catholic Church or the settled policy of the Vatican, it certainly reflects a cast of mind that is deeply skeptical about any use of armed force in the world that is not formally authorized by the Security Council. (As the experience of the 1990-1991 Gulf War shows, the Holy See's skepticism about the use of armed force extends even to actions authorized by the Security Council. I will return to this matter in a moment.)

What is striking about recent commentary from officials of the Holy See on the Security Council's monopoly of legitimating authority in the matter of using armed force is that it has been asserted, not argued. The sheer fact of the UN system seems to be taken to constitute a new moral reality; states which adhere to the UN Charter are deemed to have forfeited attributes of their sovereignty that the Catholic Church had long recognized as morally legitimate. Perhaps that is the case. But that case has to be made, not assumed. And in arguing the case, certain facts of international public life cannot be denied.

Since 1945, 126 out of 189 UN member states have been involved in 291 armed conflicts in which some twenty-two million people have been killed. Given

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this record, it is difficult to argue that the "international community" has agreed in practice to be bound by the UN Charter and its rules on the use of force. It is even more difficult to argue that the "international community" has ceded an effective monopoly on the use of force to those actions sanctioned by the Security Council. Perhaps it should; perhaps it someday will. But to assert as a matter of fact that this transfer of authority has taken place seems counterfactual today.

As I indicated previously, classic Catholic international relations theory is an expression of moral realism. Thus a developed Catholic international relations theory must wrestle with several hard realities of the UN system today. The first and perhaps most urgent is that the present structure of the Security Council is thoroughly unrealistic. Granting veto power on the Security Council to five states—China, France, Great Britain, Russia, and the United States—does not reflect the realities of contemporary world politics, but rather a set of political accommodations reached for various reasons at the end of the Second World War. The rotation of the other nine Security Council seats takes place through a process which, again, does not reflect the realities of power. These structural problems themselves should raise questions about the moral standing of the Security Council and the claim that it alone is the locus of moral authority over the use of armed force in world politics.

If we probe a little deeper, other problems emerge as well. How, for example, is moral legitimacy conferred by the Security Council when three of its permanent members—China, France, and Russia—formulate their foreign policies on explicitly realpolitik grounds that have little or nothing to do with moral reasoning about world politics as the Catholic Church understands it? Can an amoral calculus yield a morally determinative result? If so, it remains to be shown how.

To raise these questions is not to suggest that international organizations must always be a snare and a delusion, as some critics from the starboard side of American politics argue. The Catholic Church, which existed for a millennium and a half before the modern nation-state and which is the bearer of truths about the human person that must always stand in judgment on the nation-state (as they stood in judgment on previous forms of political organization), cannot regard the nation-state as the final form of human political organization. By the same token, however, it is surely true, from the point of view of a realistic moral analysis of the situation, that not every institution, agency, or process that labels itself "international" constitutes an advance for the cause of humanity and for the struggle to build the peace of order in world politics. Some are; but some are not.

Thus a developed Catholic international relations theory for the twenty-first century must undertake a critical evaluation of contemporary international organizations, asking openly, frankly, and without preconceptions whether and how those organizations contribute to the pursuit of the peace of order and to the freedom, justice, and security that are its component parts. That kind of critical examination seems crucial for the integrity of the Catholic analysis of world politics; it also seems crucial for the possible reform of international organizations. No other global institution is as likely to bring the skills of moral reasoning to bear on the task of international organizational reform as the Catholic Church. If the Catholic Church, in expressing its convictions through the diplomacy of the Holy See, were to resemble ever more closely the World Council of Churches in the latter's undifferentiated embrace of the current UN system, much would be lost—for the Church, but also for the world.

Priority four: During the 1990-1991 Gulf War, the Holy See seemed to oppose the use of armed force to reverse Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait, even though the use of force had been authorized by the Security Council. Concern for embattled minority Christian communities in the Middle East played a role here; so did the judgment, correct in my view, that it is not the task of the Holy See or the pope to bless a war. Yet the Holy See's opposition to a Gulf War authorized by the Security Council, on the one hand, and its opposition to the deposition of the Saddam Hussein regime by a coalition facing opposition from permanent and rotating members of the Security Council, on the other, raises an important question: Is the Catholic Church's position on the morally legitimate use of armed force (whether that position is manifest in the personal witness of the pope, the diplomacy of the Holy See, or the "default position" found in the relevant Vatican agencies) a kind of functional pacifism—a way of thinking that retains the intellectual apparatus of the just war tradition of moral reasoning but that always comes down, at the bottom line, in opposition to the use of armed force?

Recent events might seem to justify a positive answer to that question. But then what is one to do with John Paul II's insistence on a duty of humanitarian intervention, which would presumably include the use of proportionate and discriminate armed force in cases of impending or actual genocide? And what is one to make of recent statements by the Holy See's "foreign minister," Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo, which seem to suggest the possibility of a legitimate first use of armed force?

This complex pattern of commentary from the Holy

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See suggests that the time is ripe for a thorough reexamination of the just war tradition. In the classic Catholic understanding of the just war tradition, just war thinking is not simply a calculus of means—a set of hurdles that religious leaders pose for politicians. Rather, the just war way of thinking is a tradition of statecraft within the broader ambit of Catholic international relations theory. The just war tradition is that part of Catholic international relations theory that addresses the question of whether, under certain specific circumstances and by certain specific means, the use of proportionate and discriminate armed force can help to build the peace of order. The just war tradition does not exist in intellectual isolation from politics; it is an integral part of a larger, more comprehensive conception of world politics.

Several of the "priority issues" I have been discussing here bear on the reexamination of just war thinking for the post–Cold War world: the question of what constitutes "aggression underway" (which bears on the classic just war criteria of "just cause" and "last resort"); the moral status of the UN system (which touches the just war criterion of "proper authority"). Another reality of the contemporary world with which a reexamined and refined just war tradition would have to wrestle is the fact that precision-guided munitions and other forms of high-tech weaponry now make it more likely that a responsible country can use military force in ways that satisfy the *in bello* just war criteria of no-more-force-than-necessary and noncombatant immunity. Refining Catholic thinking on these questions is essential to the revitalization of Catholic international relations theory.

Commenting on *Pacem in Terris* in 1963, John Courtney Murray wrote that John XXIII's "acute sense of the basic need of the age is evident in the word that is so often repeated in the encyclical and that sets its basic them. I mean the word 'order.'" The passage continues:

> This does seem to be the contemporary issue. The process of ordering and organizing the world is at the moment going forward. The issue is not whether we shall have order in the world; the contemporary condition of chaos has become intolerable on a worldwide scale, and the insistent demand of the peoples of the world is for order. The question is, then, on what principles is the world going to be organized?

Murray seems to have been prescient here. After the Communist crack-up, after the Cold War, after the September 11 attacks, the question indeed is, on what principles is the world going to be organized? A developed Catholic international relations theory, mediated through the catechesis and preaching of the Catholic Church, the witness of the papacy, and the diplomacy of the Holy See, could play an important role in answering that question. It is not Catholic special pleading, but only a recognition of the realities, to suggest that the Catholic Church must play such a role at the dawn of a new century and a new millennium, if the question of the principles on which the world is to be organized is going to be grasped in its moral depth.

The Catholic Church is a world Church, and the development of a refined Catholic international relations theory must therefore be the subject of a global conversation. Within this global conversation, however, there will be many other distinct Catholic conversations. One of these strikes me as particularly important, and that is the conversation between, on the one hand, the Holy See and the Roman intellectual milieu that informs its perceptions, and, on the other hand, the United States. The world's most potent moral authority and the world's leading political, economic, and military power must be in regular and intense conversation, not only at the formal diplomatic level (important as that is), but also in a mutual exchange of ideas and perceptions between U.S.-based scholars and their counterparts in the Roman Curia and the Roman universities.

That conversation, not unlike the conversation about Catholic international relations theory in general, has not been as robust as it might be. The causes of this involve all parties, and it is not my purpose to parcel out relative responsibilities here. But now, surely, is the time to get the conversation going again. The United States, for all its faults, is not a realpolitik power—and I would argue that it cannot be one, given the nature of the American Founding and the enduring moral commitments of the American people. The Catholic Church, because it is the bearer of a great tradition of moral realism applied to world politics, is distinctively positioned to broker a new and wiser conversation throughout the world about the way in which moral truths impinge on the politics of nations. The Church's effort to do so will be respected by the United States, by its government, and by its people. Other powers may not be equally respectful.

And that, too, suggests that a new conversation is in order—a conversation about order, the principles that will guide the ordering of the world, and the principles that will guide the response of public authorities to the multiple disorders of the world. That conversation should result in the revitalization of Catholic international relations theory, which will be good for the Church and good for the world. FT

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Books in Review

We Believe

Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition. By Jaroslav Pelikan. *Yale University Press. 609 pp. $37.50.*

Reviewed by Robert Louis Wilken

In 1844 Philip Schaff, a Swiss church historian, to the surprise of his academic colleagues, accepted a position at the German Reformed Seminary in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania. At the time the seminary, under the leadership of the Reformed theologian John Nevin, was the center of a movement of renewal within the German Reformed churches in the United States. The Mercersburg Movement, as it came to be known, was an effort to recover "catholic" substance in doctrine and liturgy by returning to the classical sources of Christian faith, chiefly the writings of the Church Fathers. In this undertaking a first-class historian of Christianity was essential and Nevin was able to persuade Schaff to leave his post in Germany to settle in the United States. For a quarter of a century Schaff worked side by side with Nevin at Mercersburg, but in 1870 he moved to Union Theological Seminary in New York City. While at Union he advanced the program of Mercersburg by making available classical texts from the Christian tradition, most notably the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, still the most complete collection of translations of the Church Fathers in English. He also published in three volumes *The Creeds of Christendom* (1877), a comprehensive collection of confessional documents from all periods of church history.

Last fall Yale University Press began the publication of a new "Schaff." Like the original nineteenth-century work, the Yale edition comprises three volumes of documents, but the editors have wisely added a fourth, *Credo*, a substantive study of the role of creeds, statements of faith, confessions, and other related material over the whole history of Christianity. Jaroslav Pelikan is one of a very small company of scholars—he may be the only one—who would attempt such a task, and the result is a work of keen insight, great learning, and ecumenical generosity, written out of deep devotion to the "one holy catholic and apostolic Church" confessed in the Nicene Creed.

Creeds have been and continue to be an integral part of Christian life. "Every Sunday all over the world," writes Pelikan, "millions and millions of Christians recite or sing (or, at any rate, hear) one or another creed, and most of them have had a creed spoken over them, or by them, at their baptism." Yet many Christians, especially since the Reformation and in modern times, have voiced reservations about the legitimacy of creeds. Why are creeds necessary? Jesus did not hand on a creed, he only taught the love of God and neighbor. Isn't the Bible sufficient as a guide to faith and life? What is the relation between the Bible and creeds, i.e., between Scripture and tradition? Aren't deeds more important than creeds? Don't creeds make faith into a matter of doctrines and dogmas? Haven't creeds been instruments of oppression? Why make such a fuss about the ancient creeds when beliefs change over time? Don't creeds divide rather than unite the Church? Haven't creeds become obsolete in modern times?

These are only a few of the many topics addressed in *Credo*. For example, in answer to the question of whether the time for formulating creeds has passed, Pelikan shows that in the past two centuries, national church bodies, denominations, or ecumenical bodies, often stirred by the unprecedented situations in which modern Christians have found themselves, composed new creeds or confessions of faith: a Statement of Faith of the American Baptist Association in 1905; Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States in 1932; Statement of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar in 1958; Common Statement of Faith issued by the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches in 1978; Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines in 1986; and many others.

At the other end of the historical spectrum, in answer to the question of why we should have creeds at all, Pelikan shows that formal confessions of faith arise out of the nature of Christianity and the Holy Scriptures. The religion of the Greeks and the Romans was not creedal; it was an affair of rituals and practices. For Christianity, however, as for Judaism and Islam, each of which has its own form of creed, belief in the one true God and the conviction that God had been revealed in persons and events required that there be "some sort of formula for the confessing of the faith." Already in the Old Testament there are confessions, most

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notably the Sh'ma: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4). And in the New Testament, Paul, drawing on the Sh'ma, used the formula: "There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (1 Corinthians 8:5). It is a small step from the language of the Bible to the words of the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in God the Father Almighty," or the opening phrase of the Nicene Creed, "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

As is to be expected in a work of this sort, a good part of *Credo* is devoted to the classical creeds of the early Church and to the theological developments that supported the first confessions of faith. Schaff knew, however, that the making of creeds was not limited to the patristic period; formulas of faith and confessions were composed in medieval times (in both East and West) and especially during the Reformation, which led to a surge of new confessions. So in *Credo* Pelikan skillfully weaves into his narrative a bewildering array of doctrinal and confessional formulations, including the First Helvetic Confession, the Lateran Creed of 1215, the Orthodox Confession of the Catholic and Apostolic Eastern Church by Peter Mogila, the First Bohemian Confession of 1535 (on which Pelikan wrote his doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago in 1946), the Tridentine Profession of Faith, and the Fourteen Theses of the Old Catholic Union Conference with Greeks and Anglicans of 1874, to name but a few. He even has a paragraph on the creed of Dante in Canto 24 of his *Paradiso*. After Dante recited his creed (drawing on classical creeds) "the apostolic light" encircled him three times, says Dante, because "the speech I spoke had brought him such delight."

Although *Credo* is not a lexicon or an encyclopedia, Pelikan has designed a particularly useful index to creeds and confessions that will endear him to serious students of the history of Christian thought. Using the conception of a "synopticon," the index created for the Great Books of the Western World, Pelikan coined the term "syndogmaticon." The synopticon was arranged according to the "great ideas," and the syndogmaticon is arranged according to the dogmata, the doctrines of the Christian tradition that appear in the various creeds

PRIESTS
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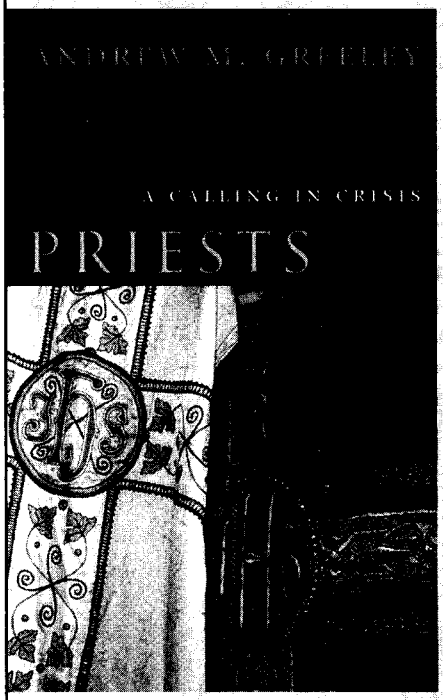

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For several years now, the Roman Catholic Church and the institution of the priesthood itself have been at the center of a firestorm of controversy. While many of the criticisms lodged against the recent actions of the Church—and a small number of its priests—are justified, the conventional wisdom that has gained currency as an explanation for these actions is, according to Andrew Greeley, often flat-out wrong. Neither liberal nor conservative, Greeley's *Priests* offers nothing less than a corrective portrait of the priesthood today.

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and confessions of faith. With the Nicene Creed as the framework, the index lists the various Christian doctrines under accessible rubrics (such as "became incarnate," "his kingdom will have no end," "who spoke through the prophets") and provides extensive references to creeds and confessions in which the doctrines are expounded.

Finally, lest I leave the impression that *Credo* is chiefly a work of reference to be dutifully catalogued and placed on a shelf in the library, it should be said that amidst all the historical detail and theological exposition Pelikan has written a vigorous defense of the durability of creedal Christianity, though he never quite puts it that way. For instance, at a key point he cites writers such as Edward Gibbon, Adolf von Harnack, and Matthew Arnold, who believed that "creeds pass" and "no altar standeth whole." At other points he quotes with approval John Henry Newman saying that "dogma" is the principle of religion, or even Lionel Trilling observing that "when the dogmatic principle in religion is slighted religion goes along for a while on generalized emotion and ethical intention . . . and then loses the force of its impulse, even the essence of its being."

Drawing on his vast knowledge of the history of Christianity, Pelikan reminds contemporary Christians of a profound truth that many theologians and church leaders in our age have forgotten: Over the Church's long history the orthodox and creedal form of faith has been the most enduring, the most adaptable, and the most faithful to the Scriptures. In his many books and lectures Jaroslav Pelikan has presented, expounded, and interpreted the great central tradition of Christian doctrine, and it is most fitting that after five decades of scholarship he has now given us a work with the title: I believe.

An Anxious Hope

American Judaism: A History. By Jonathan D. Sarna. *Yale University Press. 490 pp. $35.*

Reviewed by Alan Mittleman

This year marks the 350th anniversary of Jewish settlement in North America. In 1654, twenty-three Jews arrived in Dutch New Amsterdam from Recife, Brazil, fleeing the Inquisition. Although not the first Jews to set foot in North America, they were the first who intended to settle here. Try as he might, Peter Stuyvesant was unable to keep "these hateful enemies and blasphemers of the name of Christ" out of the colony. Economic considerations won out over religious scruples. The imperatives of trade and commerce competed with the imperatives of faith and religiously regulated public order. Jews found a promising opportunity for toleration in the shifting gap between these needs. So long as the Jews took care that the poor among them did not become a public burden and so long as they conducted their worship in the privacy of their homes, they were able to secure the rights to trade, to own property, and to participate in the body politic by serving guard duty. Jewish life begins in North America in a milieu not wholly unlike our own: a vigorous, forward-looking commercial civilization that was not disrespectful of the religious traditions of its past but was also not dominated by them. That was good for the Jews. But was it good for Judaism?

Jonathan D. Sarna's important new history, *American Judaism*, covers too many themes to be reduced to one central concern. But it is no affront to the scope and detail of the book to suggest that the question of Judaism and freedom lies at the foundation of the history he considers. Sarna begins at the beginning—with Recife and its European antecedents—and proceeds chronologically, with his first chapter, "Colonial Beginnings,"

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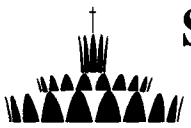
covering the dozen decades of American Jewish life that preceded the founding of the United States. Even before there was a Declaration, a Constitution, and a Bill of Rights, the question of Judaism and freedom was fundamental. Keeping in mind that Judaism lives in and is sustained by the organized community of Jews, the earliest challenge for American Judaism was how to constitute community in a new, postmedieval world. Initially, Jews tried to import the compulsory, centralized forms of community that they had known in Europe. Even as they existed in Amsterdam or London, such *kehillot*, as they were called, were already less capable than their medieval antecedents of exercising power over their members, and in British North America it soon became apparent that the *kehillot* did not stand a chance. Without effective state support for disciplinary sanctions, voluntary consensus was the only real cement for community. Although communities tried to discipline their members when consensus broke down (for example, over Sabbath violations or eating non-kosher foods), their bans had little effect. Eventually, the reality of a single comprehensive synagogue community broke down as competing synagogues arose. The religious pluralism that characterized much of colonial America became typical for Jews as well. Congregationalism replaced the European ideal of the *kehilla*. Judaism was constituted as a religion, abandoning any residual claim to defining a public, communal order for Jews.

IN THE REVOLUTIONARY period, the wholly voluntary character of American Jewish life would be given a republican interpretation. Judaism was felt to be uniquely compatible with liberty and self-government. The constituting documents of Revolutionary-era synagogues used the rhetoric of popular sovereignty and rights to assert their ideals. In this sense, an "American Judaism" arose that reflected the themes, possibilities, and crises of the American experiment. In every period, the forces shaping the religious life and thought of Christian Americans also played upon Judaism. Sarna, a master of American religious history, traces, for example, the impact of democratic culture upon Judaism during the period of the Second Great Awakening in much the same way that Nathan Hatch did for Christianity. The breakdown of traditional authority, and the emphasis on personal religious experience and free will provided an impetus to competing strategies for the renewal of Judaism.

The antebellum neotraditionalist Isaac Leeser, for instance, exploited the missionary possibilities of the printing press with vigor, translating the Bible for the first time into English, producing a national Jewish monthly, a prayer book, and much more. Leeser "witnessed how effectively Christian evangelicals harnessed the press to spread their gospel." He created the Jewish Publication Society as an analogue (and defense against) such groups as the American Bible Society. The antebellum shakeup in religious authority also provided the context for the rise of Reform Judaism—a more radical strategy of adapting to America than Leeser's revitalized traditionalism. The competition between these currents, which persists to the present day, reflects the democratic basis of American Judaism. As Sarna puts it: "The question of how best to secure Judaism's future would be decided just like so much else was in America: by majority rule."

While every page of Sarna's ele-



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gantly written narrative yields insights into the development of American Judaism, the book does not confine itself to history alone. The themes that it details—the impact of democratic culture, the rather feckless quest for unity as a concomitant to the affirmation of pluralism, the perplexed status of religious authority, the voluntary option for religious identity and the (also increasingly voluntary) ethnic alternative—press forward into the present reality of Judaism as well. In his conclusion, Sarna brings his analysis of more than three centuries of Jewish life to bear on the dilemmas of contemporary Jews. In this case, the platitude is true: The more things change, the more they stay the same. In America Jews have been an "ever dying people." Like Jews in earlier periods, contemporary Jews are acutely aware of dissolution and loss as well as revival and revitalization. Beginning in the postwar years, and increasingly in recent decades, Judaism has been marked by astonishing vitality at the center and unbridled assimilation at the not-too-distant periphery. This "bipolar model," as Sarna calls it, induces a mood of anxious uncertainty. American Judaism "radiates optimism concerning the future of American Jewish life, as well as bleak pessimism."

Sarna delineates several challenges that American Judaism must confront, all of which persist from the earliest encounter of Judaism with freedom. Foremost among them is the question of boundaries: determining who is in and who is out is an essential, "if unpleasant," task of group maintenance. In an individualistic and authority-averse culture, the traditional definitions of Jewishness no longer win the approval of large numbers of Jews: there are movements that regard as Jewish those persons whose fathers but not mothers (the traditional criterion) are Jewish; and there are thousands who profess to be Buddhists and Jews, or evangelical Christians and Jews. Surveys of the Jewish population have to resort to ever more nuanced and imaginative criteria in order to capture the diversity of self-defined Jewish types. How, if everything in a democratic culture is resolved by majority rule, can an even notional Jewish unity be preserved when the members of the voluntary Jewish polity cannot agree on fundamental boundaries? Preserving Jewish unity, such as it is, is another of

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Sarna's daunting challenges. Other challenges for contemporary Judaism include authority and leadership (who speaks for the Jews both religiously and civically?) and the conflict of loyalties engendered by the clash between contemporary culture and historic Jewish norms (consider the question of gay ordination or marriage).

DOES THE HISTORY of American Judaism provide intellectual and moral resources to meet these challenges? That it does is apparently the faith that underlies this book. Beneath the book's magisterial scholarship, there lies a passionate commitment to American Jewry. Sarna evidently believes that if American Jews learn their history, they won't be condemned to repeat it. He closes his book with a personal recollection and affirmation. At the beginning of his scholarly career, he says, he was warned that it would not be worth the trouble to study American Jewish history because the American Jews were doomed. Assimilation and intermarriage were inevitable; the writing was on the wall. It is to our great benefit that Professor Sarna did not heed this dismal advice. He took to heart, instead, a lesson from the history of American Judaism: "that today, like so often before, American Jews will find creative ways to maintain and revitalize American Judaism. With the help of visionary leaders, committed followers, and generous philanthropists, it may still be possible for the current 'vanishing' generation of American Jews to be succeeded by another 'vanishing' generation, and then still another."

After 350 years American Jews are poised between hope and anxiety about their future. While both fundamental orientations are justified on the basis of history, this book tips the balance ever so slightly in favor of hope.

The Threshold of Verse

THE POETRY OF JOHN PAUL II—ROMAN TRIPTYCH: MEDITATIONS. Translated by JERZY PETERKIEWICZ. *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. 40 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by Joseph Bottum

POLAND WENT THROUGH something of a golden age of poets in the second half of the twentieth century, and I've always suspected that Zbigniew Herbert was the best of them, although he didn't win the Nobel Prize, as both Czeslaw Milosz and Wislawa Szymborska did.

But I can only *suspect* it, for I know no Polish, and Herbert's poetry as rendered in English is not, in fact, as good as that of Milosz and Szymborska. If poetry can be translated at all—and that is a serious question—then poets, and their readers, are at the mercy of translators. Does Herbert give the same feeling of incompleteness in his original language as he does in English? Or did his rivals merely have better luck in their translators? (Luck is not the sole factor, of course; in addition to producing one pope and several poets, Poland also gave us some of the great literary operators of the twentieth century, and while nobody can match the breathtaking standard of ladder-climbing set by Jerzy Kosinski, Czeslaw Milosz always knew which end was up, and he set out early in his career to meet the great translating poets of other languages.)

This question of not-quiteness in translation—the persistent feeling of the language not quite fulfilling the promise made by the poetic imagery and the thought—has to be faced when considering the recent volume of poetry from the Polish poet Karol Wojtyla, his first collection since he became Pope John Paul II twenty-five years ago. *The Poetry of John Paul II—Roman Triptych: Meditations* is a handsome book, all in all, but it is replete with amateurish touches—such as printing on the dust jacket the coat of arms of the Pontifical North American College, as if it were the Pope's personal seal—that do not inspire confidence in a reader.

THE VERSE COLLECTED in the book is not bad, by any means. As an instance of "poetry by famous people"—such is the category in which a review in *Slate* magazine placed it—the book ranks very high. And the celebrity aspect of *Roman Triptych* can't be entirely set aside. The original sold nearly three hundred thousand copies in one week in Poland. Wislawa Szymborska has never had sales like that, not even when she won the Nobel Prize, and it's safe to say that the Poles weren't lining up to buy the book in ignorance of its author.

The sales figures for America—20,000 copies so far—also reflect the author's status and stature. A few lines in the English translation of *Roman Triptych* clunk in prosy exposition: "In the Sistine Chapel the artist depicted the Last Judgment. / The Judgment completely dominates the interior." Many lines are wildly overpunctuated: "Source, where are you?! / . . . (Silence—why are you silent? / With what care you have hidden the mystery of your origin!)." And some of the text seems genuinely obscure: "Read in this key, the invisible becomes visible. / Pre-sacrament." But so what? This is writing from the Pope. He's a genuine intellectual by anyone's standard. He has led one of the most interesting lives in modern times. He spends innumerable hours in prayer and contemplation. And he's the leader of the planet's one billion Catholics. Just how

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good must his poetry be in order to be worth reading?

But *Roman Triptych* is better than the category of celebrity verse—or different from the category of celebrity verse, for it is, finally, *about* something. Considered purely as poetry, however, it feels incomplete. The clunkiness may come from the translator, Jerzy Peterkiewicz, who rendered Wojtyla's earlier poetry into generally lifeless English in *The Place Within: The Poetry of Pope John Paul II*. But the occasional obscurity almost certainly derives from the extremely difficult poetic problem the Pope has set himself to puzzle out in *Roman Triptych*.

The book consists of three linked poems: "The Stream," "Meditations on the Book of Genesis: At the Threshold of the Sistine Chapel," and "A Hill in the Land of Moria." In the first, the Pope watches a stream as it runs down from the mountains and through the woods: "The rushing stream cannot wonder / as it descends, and the woods silently slope, / following its rhythm." In the second poem, he contemplates the art of Michelangelo's Rome: "With this truth he once cloistered himself in the Vatican / and when he emerged, he left behind the Sistine Chapel." And in the final panel of the triptych, the Pope considers Abraham as he journeyed from Ur to Mount Moria for the sacrifice of Isaac: "There was a time when people / continually wandered. / Surrounded by herds, they went where abundance beckoned."

There are several misdirected ways to take all this. Despite the fact that "The Stream" is the shortest of the poems, the dust jacket of the English edition features a photo of the Pope walking beside a mountain brook, as though we were about to read the extempore effusions of a nature poet warbling his native wood-notes wild. There's a moment in the second part where the Pope, describing the Sistine Chapel filled with cardinals at his election in 1978, declares, "so it will be again, when the need arises after my death"—and many news reports have taken the book to be about the Pope's refusal to give up authority before he dies. A few adventurous reviewers, remembering that Ur is in present-day Iraq, have even decided that the book concerns the current situation in the Middle East.

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There's no denying that all of this is present in *Roman Triptych*. John Paul II is an old man whose death looms, and he recently returned to Poland in part to walk again beside the streams he had known when he was young: "The End is as invisible as the Beginning." He is also a man who remains deeply worried by the state of the world: "'God saw all that He had made and found it very good'? / Is this not denied by history?" But as he tries to draw these themes together, something else emerges. The puzzle he finds in himself is the puzzle of the human condition, and *Roman Triptych* shows a man making one last effort to discover how to join the pieces of himself.

The epistemology here is difficult. When an artist knows a truth, does he know merely in a different way the same truth a philosopher or theologian might know—or is it an entirely different truth? When an intellectual knows a truth philosophically or theologically, is it the same truth that simple faith holds? And when believers know something through their faith, have they merely arrived directly at that toward which artists must create their way and intellectuals reason their way?

If God is one, then truth is one—and yet, the experiences of artistry, reason, and faith are so different, they do not feel one. All mystics reach eventually the same peak, which may be why each mode of knowing produces, at its highest expression, genuine mystics: there is a mysticism of art, a mysticism of the mind, a mysticism of pure faith—and, in important ways, they are in the end the same. But short of a mystical vision, how can we be sure the three distinctive paths will converge at the mountain's top?

THE IMAGE OF a threshold occurs often in *Roman Triptych*, and it is at the threshold of the unity of mystical truth that each of the three poems stands. In the first, a poet contemplates the stream of nature—and does not find, directly, God. "The Stream" ends in great tentativeness, with God never named, as though the human experience of the natural world reaches to the edge of some great revelation—but not beyond. The stream murmurs that "all this passing has sense / has sense . . . has sense . . . has sense." But it does not say what that sense is.

Although the second poem concerns an artist, it is not as an artist that John Paul II confronts

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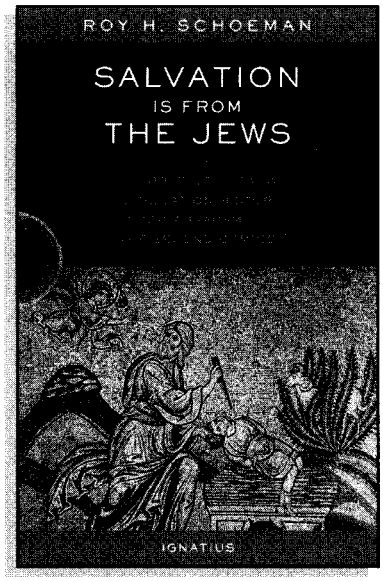

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Michelangelo, but as a theologian. Again the poetry waits in a doorway, but the door is a different one, for who but an intellectual could look at the Sistine Chapel and say, "We are standing at the threshold of a Book"? The book is Genesis, and Michelangelo's Adam, receiving creation, compels reason to consider—and extend—the "theology of the body" that John Paul II has proposed throughout his papacy.

But just as the Book of Genesis moves from the universal history of creation to the particular history of the faithful, so *Roman Triptych* moves in its third poem to the things that only the faithful know. On a journey from a hill in the land of Moria, the believer shows his truth to the artist and the theologian. Again, however, the truth waits upon something final: "If today we go to these places / whence, long ago, Abraham set out, / where he heard the Voice, where the promise was fulfilled, / we do so in order to stand at the threshold."

CONSIDERED PURELY as poetry, *Roman Triptych* fails to bring all this to perfection. The translator may be largely to blame, but I suspect that that is not all that leaves the reader grasping for something just beyond the text. Like the theology of the body, the mysticism of Genesis has been a constant in John Paul's work, and each of the three panels in the Pope's poetry reaches through a particular mode of knowing to the edge of something that the verse itself cannot reveal. John Paul II takes us with him to the threshold—of his own impending death, of the mystical vision, of the ultimate unity of human experience, of the final fulfillment of the promise implicit in Genesis. *Roman Triptych* is not a poem so much as a doorway. Judged as a doorway, it is a serious and important construction, in whatever language one approaches it.

Thomism Unwhigged

CULTURE AND THE THOMIST TRADITION: AFTER VATICAN II. By TRACEY ROWLAND. *Routledge. 168 pp. $28.95 paper.*

Reviewed by Douglas A. Ollivant

TRACEY ROWLAND, Dean of the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family in Melbourne, Australia, has produced a rich, subtle, and impressive first book. *Culture and The Thomist Tradition* appears, curiously, in the Radical Orthodoxy Series. (I say curiously because some books in the series have not been, to put it mildly, particularly supportive of John Paul II's vision of marriage and the family). This book establishes Rowland as a significant voice in current and future debates about the Church and modernity.

Rowland makes three core claims about the nature of the Church's interaction with modernity. First, liberalism is not the "neutral ground" it claims to be but is instead its own culture and tradition, and one fundamentally hostile to a Thomistic understanding of the world. Second, the leaders of the Second Vatican Council had not adequately explored the nature of liberal modernity when they spoke of the "modern world" to which the Church must relate. Rowland here refers especially to *Gaudium et Spes* (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World). Third, the "Whig Catholics" and those close to them, such as the "New Natural Lawyers," also fail to identify modern liberalism correctly

DOUGLAS A. OLLIVANT *is the editor of* Jacques Maritain and the Many Ways of Knowing *(The Catholic University of America Press, 2002).*

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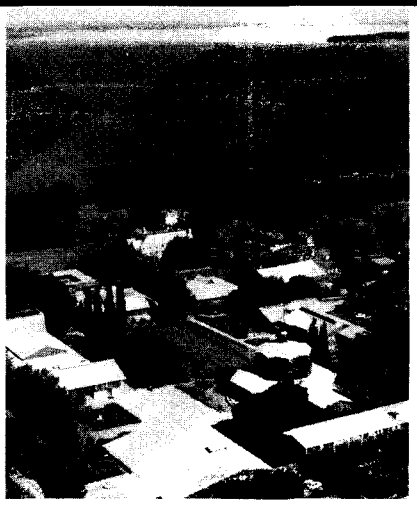

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and have therefore bent, and perhaps mutilated, Catholic principles in their attempt to synthesize these principles with modern liberalism. In light of these difficulties, Rowland calls for the Church to recognize a "postmodern Augustinianism" as the preferred approach to the age.

These are bold claims, but Rowland displays plenty of evidence to support them. With regard to the first, Rowland convincingly maintains that liberal democracy, the predominant political philosophy of the West, is hostile to any claim of a higher standard to which one must conform, making its relationship with Thomism adversarial. Rowland says that liberalism is focused on "formulating theories of justice within which maximum freedom is granted the individual to pursue *any* version of self-development." She further maintains, following Alisdair MacIntyre, that since liberalism is a theory that promotes self-development without limits, a decline into some form of nihilism is inevitable (though, within nihilism, Rowland considers Sartre a viable alternative to Nietzsche). This, Rowland maintains, is the core of the "culture of death" identified by John Paul II. Self-development in the absence of an external standard will tend to become either sadistic or suicidal.

Moving on to her second claim, Rowland quickly establishes that *Gaudium et Spes* has no overarching theological framework and that the terms used in the document, notably "modern world" and "modern man," are characterized by (in the words of Francis Cardinal George) "terminological looseness," a problem further "compounded in various vernacular translations." The most common rendering of the intention of *Gaudium et Spes* has been "accommodation" (though the word appears nowhere in the document). In response, Rowland repeats and endorses the question of Karl Barth: "Accommodation to what?" In light of John Paul II's description of the modern West as promoting a "culture of death," should the Church be in any rush to accommodate itself to Western modernity?

GIVEN HER DESCRIPTION of liberalism and its problems, it is no surprise that Rowland finds fault with those who seek to discover or create a synthesis of liberalism and Catholicism. Certainly her exposition of the tensions between them mandates that any such attempt be made very carefully. But in her zeal

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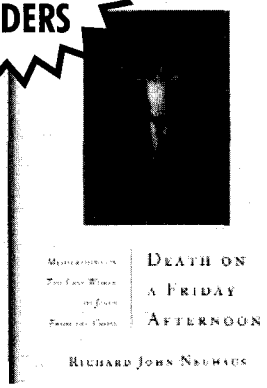

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to correct a mindless acceptance of liberalism, she lapses into an excessive hostility that prevents her from acknowledging the undeniable goods that modernity has brought. Her root-and-branch rejection of the modern era makes one wonder if she appreciates the improvements of the past two centuries and whether she has an alternative explanation for them. Rowland does not seem to grasp that modernity—and the liberalism with which it is intertwined—has improved the human condition in certain respects, even while simultaneously (as Rowland documents) diminishing it in others. Her failure to acknowledge that progress and decline coexist in Western societies makes her work less persuasive than it otherwise might have been.

There is also a certain ambiguity in Rowland's use of the term "culture." To just what culture is she referring? At times, she seems to have in mind the internal culture of the Church in the West (American and Australian) in mind, and when put in this context, her critique is indeed damning. The Church should be a "culture of love" and should accept nothing but the best in its internal workings. Rowland here adds to the growing and deeply disturbing documentation of the infiltration of bureaucracy and banality into church governance and—most critically—into liturgy. Rowland also draws attention to the difficulties inherent in attempting to frame Catholic concepts in liberal terms—she highlights and questions John Paul II's use of such terms as "rights" and "liberation" in particular.

But when Rowland shifts her attention to the culture at large, her critique begins to lose its power. It goes without saying that liberal democracy and democratic capitalism have a great many flaws, but Rowland's presentation lacks a prudential assessment of the range of possible alternatives. One can be acutely aware of liberalism's shortcomings and still find it the best of all practicable options. Rowland sometimes seems to imply that liberalism is so fundamentally flawed and hostile to the faith that *any* replacement would be an improvement. The bloody history of the last century stands in clear judgment against this claim.

Finally, given Rowland's familiarity with the wide range of Catholic-influenced political thought, her omission of two prominent writers is disappointing. The first of these thinkers is Pierre Manent, who would challenge Rowland's assertion, borrowed from David Schindler, that the only moments of significance in human history are creation, incarnation, and the eschaton. In *The City of Man*, Manent makes a strong case that "modern man" is something qualitatively different from "man" *simpliciter*. If Manent is correct, Rowland's analysis must deal with this fact. The second thinker whom she unaccountably passes by is Peter Augustine Lawler, who might question why Rowland feels the need to be "at home" in this world. In *Postmodernism Rightly Understood*, Lawler, echoing Pascal, challenges readers to accept the human destiny of being a wondering wanderer, or a wandering wonderer, in this world, and he might ask Rowland why she believes that any culture will ever be compatible with the transcendent focus of Catholicism.

Despite these omissions, this is an important book by a very welcome voice. If her own approach sometimes displays a lack of moderation, she also shows that others may have been similarly immoderate in their embrace of liberalism. Rowland has made a significant contribution to the Church's continuing engagement with the wider world.

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When the Going Was Bad

WAUGH ABROAD: COLLECTED TRAVEL WRITING. By EVELYN WAUGH. *Knopf. 1106 pp. $25.*

Reviewed by David B. Hart

THE YEAR 2003 marked the centenary of the birth of Evelyn Waugh, which Knopf has chosen to observe by reissuing all seven of his "travel" books in one handsome, inexpensive Everyman's Library volume. Most of these titles have been out of print, or only sporadically in print, since they were originally published. Waugh did make a selection from the first four of them in 1945, under the title *When the Going Was Good*, but that book omits too much material to serve either as a chronicle of the author's literary development or as a fully satisfying treatment of any of the events he recounts. And so this new collection is a considerable boon to the Waugh enthusiast.

It is not, however, a particularly notable contribution to the cause of travel books considered as a distinct genre. Such books have a rich tradition in Britain, and many occupy an honored place in the nation's literature. Indeed, many preserve some of the more perdurable specimens of English prose: the dry picaresque of Robert Louis Stevenson's travel stories, the droll elegance of A. W. Kinglake's *Eothen*, the haunting beauty of C. M. Doughty's *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, the luminous austerity of Wilfred Thesiger's books, the crystalline perfection of Norman Douglas', the fluent, faintly metaphysical lyricism of Freya Stark's. And, of course, towering above the entire field—serene and monumental—stand the works of Patrick Leigh Fermor. Judged alongside any of these, purely as literary excursions, Waugh's books fail almost absolutely.

But this is only to say that the pleasure they afford is of another sort. For the most part, Waugh's books are not really about travel at all. True travel writers work upon the assumption that their task is, primarily, to see and to describe, and where possible to enter into as profound a sympathy for their subjects as they can; Waugh proceeds upon the (subversive) assumption that his business is to evaluate and to comment, and to avoid sympathy as assiduously as circumstances and good taste permit. For all his considerable prowess as a stylist, in these books he rarely troubles to convey any image or experience with appreciable vividness or pungency (except where an opportunity for mockery presents itself). Any reader of his novels knows that he was quite capable of painting pictures with words when necessary; but his genius lay elsewhere. His prose is urbane, unsentimental, and economical, hospitable to moments of purple abandon but at its best when its controlled and even flow allows him to pass from delicacy to savagery and back again without any visible effort. It is, in short, a prose of personality, not of scenery; of irony, not of anecdotes. And so it is in these books.

And both the personality and the irony are ostentatiously those of Evelyn Waugh. The real "topic" of these works is his literary persona, which is an invention elaborate enough to sustain any reader's interest over long passages of vague description and uneventful narrative. Especially early on in this volume, when Waugh is still the *enfant terrible* of English letters, it is clear that the lands through which he passes and the peoples among whom he sojourns are largely inconsequential to—except as occasions of—his writing; the more dreary the setting or ghastly the situation, the more he is at play in his native element. Where the surroundings are dull, the amenities frightful, the conversations insufferable, the flora withered, or the meals inedible, he is best able to fill in the portrait he wishes to paint of himself: acidulous, not vicious but mercilessly cognizant of unflattering details; mildly atrabilious but more typically phlegmatic, immune equally to alarm or enchantment, hewing to a fine medium between polished boredom and slightly macabre curiosity; passing overt judgment on nothing, but with such imperturbably sardonic detachment as in fact to pass judgment on everything; sagaciously callow, capable only of pale enthusiasms, already shaped by fixed—but not fanatical—prejudices, and entirely unsentimental regarding indigenous cultures.

THE MOST ENJOYABLE (indeed, hilarious) of these books is the first, *Labels* (1930). The putative subject of this work is the author's 1929 travels in the Mediterranean—including European, North African, and Near Eastern ports of call—but apart from exactingly observed instances of the absurd or the grotesque the prose souvenirs of his journey are cursory and gray. I came away from this book with no more vibrant images of Malta, Cairo, Naples, or Constantinople than when I began; but I vividly recalled Waugh's reflections on the travel snob's delight in the inconveniences visited on him by foreign customs officials, his proposals for a novel, whose protagonist would be one or another item of women's clothing, his excursus on celibacy and the erotic reveries induced in affluent middle-aged widows by advertising copy, his distaste for Turkish decorative devices, and his devastatingly ambiguous "celebrations" of the architecture of Gaudi in Barcelona.

Between *Labels* and his second

DAVID B. HART *is an Eastern Orthodox theologian and author of* The Beauty of the Infinite *(Eerdmans, 2003).*

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travel book, *Remote People* (1931), two immense events somewhat altered the course of Waugh's life: His first wife's adultery precipitated the collapse of his marriage; and he was received into the Catholic Church. Of the first, one finds here no clue. For one thing, nowhere in *Labels* had Waugh even hinted that he had made his tour with his wife; instead he had transferred the travails of their journey (during which she was extremely ill) onto another, fictional English couple. His Catholicism, though, soon begins to make its effect felt. From this point on, a shift in Waugh's sympathies becomes ever more evident in these books, at least wherever he encounters Catholic piety; and it soon becomes obvious that there is one topic concerning which he is now incapable of jest.

Like its predecessor, however, *Remote People* is principally a burlesque. It recounts Waugh's travels in East Africa, first in Ethiopia (where he witnesses the events surrounding Haile Selassie's coronation) and then in and around the British colonial possessions to the south—Kenya and Tanganyika—and the Belgian Congo. Waugh's Saxon hauteur before the pomp and pretense of the Ethiopian festivities is often parochial and small; he sees only tawdry vulgarity, casual cruelty, squalor, faded grandeur, and false glory; nothing of the ancient Christian civilization of the Amharic people even excites his attention. Still, his reminiscences are extremely amusing (especially his description of the American professor, an "expert" in Coptic ritual, who is forever losing his place in the Ge'ez liturgies and making authoritative pronouncements that are promptly shown to be entirely wrong). And the hellish narrative of his peregrinations through the colonial interior constitutes perhaps his best sustained assault on one's expectations of travel literature.

For Waugh's most irreverent, seditious treatment of the romantic conventions of the genre, however, one must read *Ninety-Two Days* (1934), which recounts his journeys through—and the very choice of setting bespeaks a certain perversity of temperament—the hinterlands of British Guiana. If there is any more unprepossessing expanse of earth upon the globe, one cannot imagine where. This book is an unremitting account of misery, privation, and pointlessness in a world of dun landscapes, tormenting insects, malnutrition, and cultural stagnancy. What makes it fascinating, though, is the almost demented composure of the

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author; it demonstrates with remarkable poignancy how, in its way, British equanimity can constitute a kind of emotional extremism. When Waugh describes *farine*, the practically inedible staple of the indigenous diet (which, in its unrefined form, is in fact toxic), or the nightly labor of extracting *djiggas* from the soles of his feet before they can lay their septicemial eggs, or his almost constant hunger and thirst, one is left with a sense not only of the sublime callousness of nature, but of the lunacy of choosing to confront it with a good will rather than fleeing from it with or without one's dignity intact. There are moments of brilliant comic portraiture here—for instance, the description of the mad religious visionary Mr. Christie—but more striking perhaps is how Waugh's Catholicism comes suddenly and soberly to the fore when he turns to his recollections of the St. Ignatius Mission, or when he ascribes to supernatural assistance a sequence of coincidences that saved him from becoming at one point irretrievably lost in the wilderness.

FOR READERS WHO suffer from no excessive passion for completeness, *Waugh in Abyssinia* (1936) is the book in this collection most profitably skipped. Not only is it less diverting than those preceding it; it is an unsavory artifact of Waugh's mercifully brief infatuation with Mussolini and is altogether deplorable. It recounts Waugh's impressions of Ethiopia before and during Italy's brutal invasion, which he sees as a new advance of the Roman eagles into a land desirous (like ancient Britain) of the civilizing power they represent. He stalwartly refuses to believe stories of Italian atrocities. His distaste for Haile Selassie, while not unwarranted, leads him to describe the emperor's flight into exile but not the emperor's direct part in the hopeless campaigns of the Ethiopian military against a merciless and contemptible enemy. And his unfavorable comparison of the court ceremony of Ethiopia to that of medieval Europe is cretinous in its poverty of historical perspective.

Happily, Waugh had regained his sanity, and perhaps his soul, by the time he wrote *Robbery Under Law* (1939). This is not really a travel book (though it concerns a visit to Mexico) but an essay in political and moral philosophy, a meditation on the power of authoritarian ideology to desiccate and destroy even a rich and long-established civilization, and a frequently acute study of the strange liaison between autocracy and anarchy. He sees the Mexico of General Cardenas as a cautionary epitome of the fragility of all civilization, and of the peril that communism, or fascism, or Nazi ideology, or any other movement of "progressive" humanism represents for any people insufficiently jealous of its traditions, culture, and faith. It is also rather touching to find Waugh defending the pieties of Mexican Indians (his fellow Catholics) against the disdain of more "advanced" nations and heaping derision on racialist bigotries.

The final two volumes in this collection, *The Holy Places* (1952) and *A Tourist in Africa* (1960), emanate from a later, more fatigued period in Waugh's life. The former consists simply of two short, devout articles: one on St. Helena (Constantine's mother and the protagonist of Waugh's most justly neglected novel) and one on the Holy Land (over which Britain's cession of authority displeases him mightily). The latter book is a diary of travel through British East Africa, marked by flashes of mordancy and moments of sincere sympathy for his African Christian brethren, but also by a certain intellectual lethargy: here alone in this collection his reliably pellucid prose becomes often flaccid and jejune. Again, he pours scorn on racialist mythology but, in his steadfastly conservative way, refuses to become histrionically sanctimonious on the matter, preferring studied contempt to self-promoting outrage.

This volume is a substantial addition to Waugh's available literary

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remains. It begins better than it ends; but so, usually, does life, and this collection spans the entire creative life of its author. For all his well-deserved reputation as a caustic and irascible cynic solicitous only of his prejudices, it is ultimately Waugh's skepticism towards any claims of cultural superiority on the part of modern civilization that constitutes the most continuous "moral" theme in these works (with one unfortunate interruption). Not that he does not exhibit his fair share of "Anglo-Saxon attitudes" (they are the mainstays of his humor), but when one reads through this volume from beginning to end, it is Waugh's increasingly Christian sense of a community of faith transcendent of race, culture, class, or country that leaves the most resonant impression. And for me, I must admit, this came as something of a revelation.

Briefly Noted

Hitler and the Vatican: Inside the Secret Archives That Reveal the Complete Story of the Nazis and the Church. By Peter Godman. *Free Press. 282 pp. $27.*

Last year the Vatican opened the previously sealed archives that contain correspondence between the Holy See and Germany from the years 1923-1939. Peter Godman, a professor at the University of Rome, was one of the first researchers given access to these archives, and in this book he sets forth his important findings. Based on the documents he uncovered, it can no longer seriously be argued that anti-Semitism influenced the Catholic leaders of that era. To quote Godman, "Both Pius XI and his second-in-command [Secretary of State Eugenio Pacelli—the future Pope Pius XII] recognized the Church's duty to intervene in order to alleviate the suffering of German Jews. Not only Jews converted to Catholicism but all people, irrespective of race, rank, or religion, in need of Christian charity." The documents show that by 1936 the Vatican understood that Nazi treatment of the Jews violated the law of justice toward all races, which the Supreme Tribunal of the Roman Church regarded as a binding principle. The documents also show that

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the Vatican leadership worked closely with the German bishops to determine how best to counter the Nazi threat. They drafted several statements, made some public, sent others to the German government, and still others remained unseen until the archives were opened last year. Godman devotes significant attention to the 1933 concordat between the Holy See and Germany. Many critics have argued that this agreement signaled Vatican approval of the Nazi regime. The documents prove otherwise. Godman writes, "The notion that [Pius XI and Pacelli] harbored sympathies for National Socialism, because they continued to negotiate with its leaders, must be rejected." Despite the evidence that Godman reveals, he is ultimately critical of the Catholic leaders. He believes that although they were strongly anti-Nazi, their prudential decisions caused them to miss an opportunity to limit the horror of the Holocaust. In making this argument, he unfortunately overlooks or minimizes many of the statements that were made and actions that were undertaken. He also devotes far too much attention to seemingly unrelated subjects, such as the Church's teaching on sexual morality. In the end, the importance of this book comes not in the author's analysis, but in the new documents, all of which show that Pope Pius XI and Cardinal Pacelli bitterly opposed the Nazis and did what they thought they could to assist the victims, regardless of race or religion.

—Ronald J. Rychlak

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GOD'S SECRETARIES: THE MAKING OF THE KING JAMES BIBLE. By ADAM NICOLSON. *HarperCollins. 281 pp. $24.95.*

"Committees thrive on compromise, and compromise produces fudge and muddle." So writes Adam Nicolson in *God's Secretaries*, as he sets out to explore how, "miraculously," a committee of fifty scholars and vicars succeeded in producing the most beautiful words in the English language and a book of enduring quality. "Five billion copies of this Bible have been sold," said Nicolson in a televised interview. "It is the Bible that the world knows as the Bible." His accessible and engaging account of its creation captures a unique moment in English history, the opening of the seventeenth century, when a new monarch, James I, commissioned this new translation as part of a project to unify his realm amid conflicting theologies and styles of worship. Nicolson gives a revealing account of the characters in this drama, including biographical treatments of each of the translators, many of whom were obscure then and are mostly forgotten now. Nicolson conveys the suspense and drama of the age and the intensity of England's religious conflicts. The book will be of interest to students of early Anglican thought and to anyone who is open to seeing how God's purposes can be accomplished through frail and fallen human beings.

—Vern Caswell

EDUCATING FOR LIBERTY: THE FIRST HALF-CENTURY OF THE INTERCOLLEGIATE STUDIES INSTITUTE. By LEE EDWARDS. *Regnery. 343 pp. $27.95.*

What is "the Sharon Statement"? Is it (A) Ariel's latest pronouncement from Jerusalem; (B) Ms. Stone's latest press release from Hollywood; or (C) the charter of the Young Americans for Freedom drafted at the Buckley family home in Sharon, Connecticut, in 1960? Those who in their heart know they're right about the answer (which is C) should enjoy this book exceedingly, as they are presumably already in the conservative fold. Those who did not know the right answer will learn it, and much else about the conservative movement in America, from this "official history" of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), which the author calls "the educational pillar of American conser-

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vatism." The tale is lively and Edwards' detailed narrative includes a generous sprinkling of *bons mots* from ISI-affiliated wits. Founded in 1953 to help resurrect liberal arts education and to counter, with newsletters, lecturers, and clubs, the prevailing "socialism" and "statism" on college campuses, ISI was originally the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists, but the name was changed in 1966 to Intercollegiate Studies Institute, for it had become clear that the word "individualist" (always troublesome at best) had ceased connoting the "responsible individual" envisioned by ISI's founders in the '50s and now connoted the "autonomous individual" of the antinomian '60s. For several generations of college students, ISI's lectures, colloquia, and fellowships, its growing network of student newspapers, its increasingly influential journals and books, and its popular guides to colleges and academic subjects, have helped to make conservative thought—some would say classical liberal thought—a living presence on campuses, and many ISI alumni have matured into important contributors to American intellectual and political life. Edwards says that "the ISI ethos" is that "politics and economics are secondary to moral and cultural issues" (which is an admirably nonmaterialist ethos indeed) and he recounts that Stephen Tonsor, speaking under ISI auspices in 1986, administered an early tongue-lashing to "neoconservatives," telling the "former Marxists" and "cultural modernists" in the neoconservative ranks that "they must return to the religious roots, beliefs, and values of our common being." Fifty years ago ISI was three men (Frank Chodorov, Frank Hanighen, and William F. Buckley, Jr.) armed only with a thousand-dollar check from J. Howard Pew; today ISI has 50,000 members and an $8 million annual budget. But it still has, as Edwards says, a long way to go, "because the road to liberty is never ending."

Performing the Faith: Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Nonviolence. By Stanley Hauerwas. *Brazos. 256 pp. $19.99 paper.*

Eleven essays, two on Bonhoeffer and politics, by Stanley Hauerwas of Duke University. Early on in his career, the author made substantive contributions regarding the role of narrative and character in Christian ethics, and he here reflects with both modesty and appreciation on how lasting those contributions may be. Of particular interest is his friendly response to Jeffrey Stout's *Tradition and Democracy*, which is sharply critical of Hauerwas and was sharply criticized in these pages by Gilbert Meilaender (see First Things, April). Hauerwas again accents the churchly nature of Christian ethics. He writes, "That is why theologians are subordinate to the bishop and should be disciplined by the bishop if our work threatens the unity and holiness of the church." He adds in a footnote, "This sentence of course betrays one of the besetting problems of my work—namely, my ambiguous ecclesial position." As a freelancer in the liberal United Methodist Church, he need not worry about being disciplined by a bishop. He also recognizes that, writing as he does within the enclave of the university, "I make generalizations that in other contexts might need qualification." Although his position may be shel-

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tered from realities with which others must contend, and although he may sometimes say one thing and do another, Hauerwas concludes, "Better to have the limits of my life exposed than to say what I know is less than the truth."

THE RETURN OF ANTI-SEMITISM. By GABRIEL SCHOENFELD. *Encounter. 193 pp. $25.95.*

More than a decade ago, William F. Buckley, Jr. published *In Search of Anti-Semitism*, yet another effort on his part to purge the conservative movement of a great evil. Those opposed to his argument will say that Gabriel Schoenfeld, senior editor at *Commentary*, should have adopted Buckley's book title. Search and you will find. In unhappy truth, however, Schoenfeld does not have to search. He is describing a return, especially but not only in Europe, of a passionate prejudice that many thought had been consigned to past history. He is particularly exercised by a "coterie of preening left-wing Jews," also in this country, who are leading the attack on barriers against "the poisonous ideas" of anti-Semitism. While Schoenfeld's book might have been more effective had he more carefully distinguished between anti-Semitism and criticism of the State of Israel and its policies, and while there is slight explanatory value in his invocation of Norman Cohn's assertion that anti-Semitism is a "collective psychopathology," the phenomenon described in *The Return of Anti-Semitism* is all too real. This is a sobering book.

AMERICA THE VIRTUOUS: THE CRISIS OF DEMOCRACY AND THE QUEST FOR EMPIRE. By CLAES G. RYN. *Transaction. 223 pp.* $34.95.

Claes Ryn, professor of politics at Catholic University, has no illusions about his argument carrying the day anytime soon. The liberal elites that have so profoundly distorted the American constitutional order can only be effectively countered by another elite that champions the wisdom of the Founders, and that counter-elite is nowhere on the horizon. Populist appeals to the traditionalism of "Middle America" can, at best, slow the pace of liberal disintegration, since traditionalists are, for the most part, just people who are slow to catch on to what is happening. As for conservatism, it is today largely dominated by neoconservatives who are more accurately described as neo-Jacobins. As the Jacobins of the French Revolution assumed their moral superiority and the universal applicability of their righteous rule, so the neoconservatives now in the saddle advocate a reckless and unlimited crusade on behalf of America's virtuous empire. Ryn's is a Burkean sensibility as applied to the American constitutional order, with a strong accent on limited government and federalism. On today's spectrum of political options, his disposition has no party and not even a publicly recognized name. Lonely though his voice may be, Ryn provides a necessary caution about our country's present course and proposes, however wanly, what he believes is a better way. *America the Virtuous* is no campaign platform for winning elections, but it is an aid to thinking clearly about this moment in American and world history.

ON THINKING THE HUMAN: RESOLUTIONS OF DIFFICULT NOTIONS. By ROBERT W. JENSON. *Eerdmans. 86 pp. $16 paper.*

Gilbert Meilaender's comment on Jenson's latest book is entirely on target: "Do not think of it as bedtime reading. Eliminate the word 'skim' from your vocabulary. Rid yourself of the idea that philosophers and theologians are engaged in fundamentally different enterprises. Throw out the idea that human existence is unproblematic, but that God's is a puzzle and can be understood only by reference to our own." In these few pages Jenson offers thought experiments or, better, thought adventures on the most constitutive concepts relative to being human—death, consciousness, freedom, reality, wickedness, and love. In his writings in systematic theology, Jenson has been at the forefront of the remarkable revival of trinitarian thought, and it is no surprise that each of his "resolutions" is emphatically trinitarian, although it is sometimes surprising how he gets there. Jenson's com-

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mand of the theological and philosophical traditions, including contemporary postmodernisms, is everywhere on impressive display. For example: "If I may put it so: what rescues the real God the Father and the real God the Son from the Hegelian face-off, from Oedipal mutual bondage, is God the Spirit, whose biblical role is precisely that he is freedom and love. The Spirit intends the Father and the Son, and the Spirit's intention for them is that they shall love one another. The Spirit frees the Father to let the Son go, and so actually to love him. The Spirit frees the Son from servility to the Father, and so actually to love him." These essays are cogitation of a high order in the service of demonstrating, persuasively, that "thinking the human" is best done by rethinking Christian orthodoxy.

The Virgin of Guadalupe: Theological Reflections of an Anglo-Lutheran Liturgist. By Maxwell E. Johnson. *Rowman & Littlefield. 192 pp. $35.*

A Lutheran thinker offers a sympathetic account of the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Because the story was not written, by Miguel Sánchez and later by Luis Lasso de la Vega, until more than a century had passed, some historians have cast doubt on the historicity of the events on which the cult is based. Johnson is judicious: "In the final analysis, with regard to its origins, as to whether or not the Virgin Mary actually appeared to Juan Diego at Tepeyac in December of 1531, the historian cannot offer a conclusive answer. According to the minimal written documentation in existence, 'something' indigenous was happening at Tepeyac very early on in relationship to devotion to the Virgin, and therefore there is really no reason to conclude that at least the core of the later versions of Sánchez and Lasso de la Vega is not somehow in continuity with that." While most Protestants reject Marian devotion *tout court*, some Lutherans and Episcopalians working among Hispanics have adopted (and superficially adapted) Our Lady of Guadalupe for purposes of evangelizing Latino immigrants. Johnson favors something more honest and more difficult, "a Protestant-Catholic *Mestizaje*, a synthesis of popular Guadalupanismo and Protestant theological convictions."

The Reform of the Reform?: A Liturgical Debate. By Thomas M. Kocik. *Ignatius. 273 pp. $14.95 paper.*

The debate over the reform of the rite of the Mass following the Second Vatican Council goes on and on. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's critique of what has gone wrong and right has given currency to the phrase "reform of the reform," which is what Father Kocik says is very much needed. The first reformers, he says, were "schizophrenically behaving one moment as if a Huxleyan Brave New Church emerged in the 1960s, the next moment as if the Church reached her maturity sometime around the third century." The result was a severe destabilizing of liturgy, with critics divided between those who want a return to the rite preceding the Council and those who embrace the reforms actually mandated by the Council but oppose the liberties taken by experts claiming the authority of "the spirit" of the Council. The present book includes as appendices the rites of the 1962 and 1970 missals, as well as essays by liturgical scholars on diverse aspects of reforming the reform. All are agreed that what is needed will not happen unless bishops are prepared to challenge the hegemony of progressive experts.

Dictionary of Saints. By John J. Delaney. *Doubleday. 702 pp. $35.*

First published in 1980, this lovely book has sold hundreds of thousands of copies and is now updated to include the more recently beatified and canonized—and in the pontificate of John Paul II there have been many. Between this and *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, it is something of a toss-up. *Oxford* offers more wry and sometimes humorous sidelights, but Delaney is the more current.

The Unformed Conscience of Evangelicalism. By J. Daryl Charles. *Intervarsity. 277 pp. $14 paper.*

Charles teaches religion and philosophy at Taylor University in Indiana, and he here takes fellow Evangelicals to task for neglecting the subject of ethics, especially in relation to culture and public policy. Evangelicals should emulate Roman Catholic intellectuals and, especially, John Paul II in making a reasoned public case for a rightly ordered society, he suggests. As an appendix, Charles offers an illuminating treatment of the advocacy for, and practice of, euthanasia from the beginning of the twentieth century, through the Hitler era, and up to the present. The book's title, of course, recalls the late Carl Henry's history-changing argument of 1947, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. Charles' volume is accessible to the general reader and will serve admirably as a text in evangelical colleges and seminaries.

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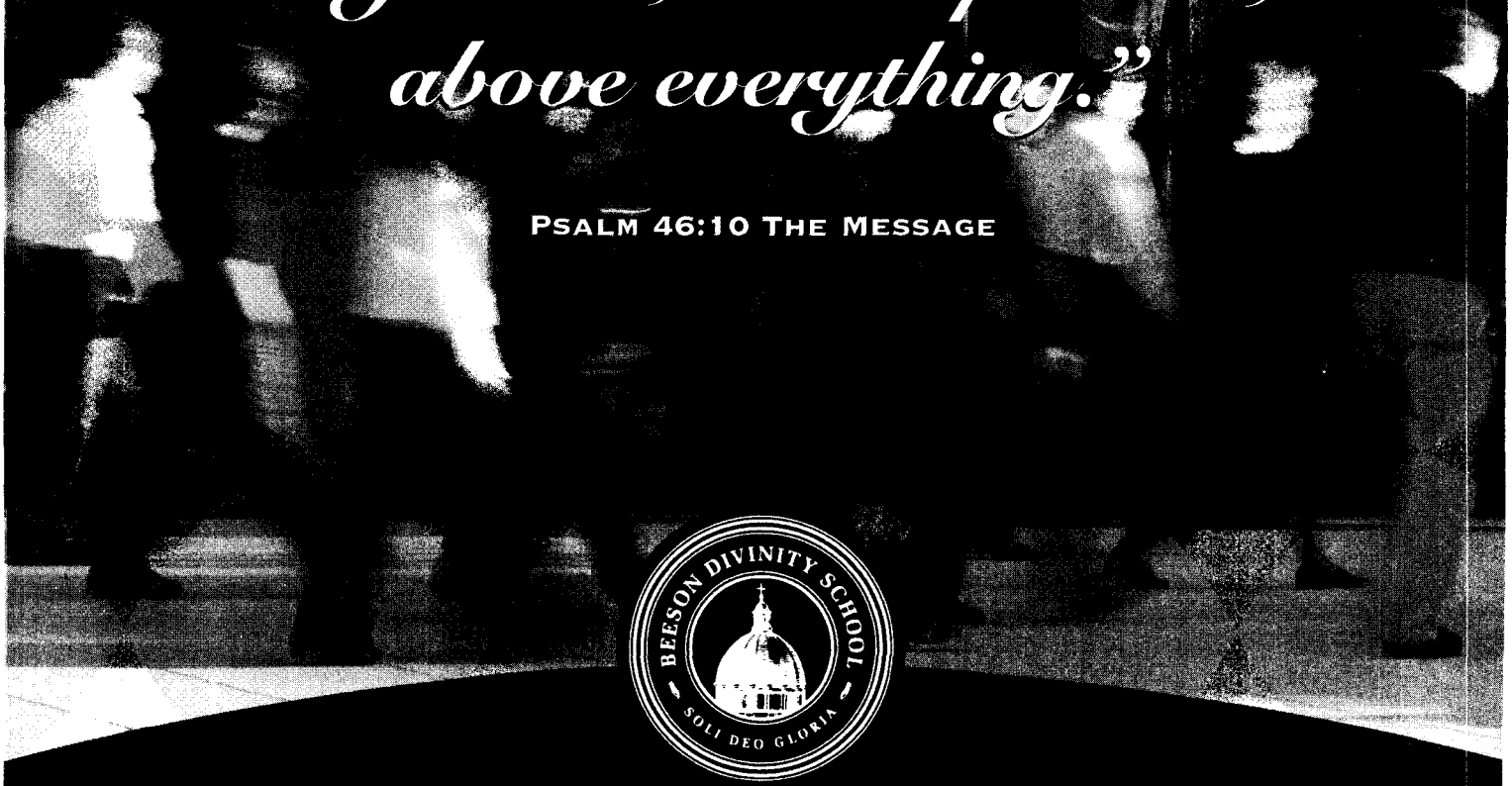

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The Catholic Reform

The cover of the 150-page report of the National Review Board (NRB) is deep purple, the color of Lenten penitence, which is just right for this telling moment in the Long Lent that began with the Boston exposures of January 2002. It is titled "A Report on the Crisis in the Catholic Church in the United States." Not the "Sex Abuse Crisis in the Catholic Church" but the "Crisis in the Catholic Church." Long before there was a sex abuse crisis, there was a spiritual crisis, a moral crisis, a doctrinal crisis, and a crisis of misgovernance in the Catholic Church in the United States. All these crises finally come down to what the bishops did and did not do, what the bishops have and have not been doing for decades. The report is about priestly perpetrators and their victims; it is about seminaries and spiritual formation; it is about lawyers and the compromising of the Church's independence. But, mainly and most importantly, the report is about bishops.

When, in their panicked Dallas meeting of 2002, the bishops created a National Review Board of prominent Catholic laity, I was opposed to the idea. I said and wrote that the bishops should take the heat and the responsibility for what had happened. I thought it was a dangerous precedent to have lay *episcopoi* of the *episcopoi*, overseers of the episcopal overseers; that it would play into the hands of dissenting Catholics who challenge what, in Catholic teaching, is the divinely constituted structure of the Church governed by bishops who are successors to the apostles. I hoped the bishops would devise some means—perhaps a plenary council or a long collegial retreat—to honestly examine what had gone wrong and come up with a believable program for reform. I was wrong. It is now apparent that the bishops as a body, meaning the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), were incapable of doing what the National Review Board has done. It is inconceivable that the bishops and bureaucracy of the USCCB could have produced the forthright analysis and program of reform that the NRB issued in Washington on Friday, February 27. The NRB has done what the bishops should have done. The report is a great gift to the bishops and to the Church. Now the question is whether the bishops are capable of receiving the report, and acting on it. If not—and the initial responses are not encouraging—they will, as the report suggests, further undermine the confidence of the Catholic faithful in the authority, competence, and moral integrity of their leaders. That is the "Crisis in the Catholic Church in the United States." The report leaves no doubt that clerical sex abuse opened a window, exposing to sight a much larger reality of nonfeasance and malfeasance in the leadership of the Church.

A bit of history is in order, and it goes back long before January 2002. It goes back, in fact, to the beginnings of Catholicism in this country, to what is called the "trusteeship controversies." Beginning in the 1780s and up through the nineteenth century, some Catholic laity were attracted to the voluntaristic idea of church membership and church government that they saw in the Protestant denominations around them. Parishes elected lay "trustees" who took charge of the temporal affairs of the churches, including the salaries and, in some cases, the appointment of clergy. This American

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model, as it was called, was encouraged by a few bishops such as John England of Charleston, South Carolina, but Rome and the great majority of bishops viewed it, correctly, as a form of "congregationalism" incompatible with the Catholic understanding of the divine constitution of the Church. Trusteeism was effectively suppressed by the end of the nineteenth century, being replaced by patterns of what the NRB rightly calls the "clericalism" that has much to do with the "Crisis in the Catholic Church in the United States." Still today, priests, and priests who become bishops, are trained to take alarm at the slightest hint of "trusteeism." That is why, among other things, parish pastors expend inordinate time and energy on the minutiae of administration that could be better handled by laypeople. That is why bishops engaged in the practices of autocracy, secrecy, and cover-up that contributed so powerfully to the current crisis.

Among the great gifts in the gift that is the NRB report is that it steals the thunder of those who have so long and so loudly campaigned against clericalism in order to advance agendas alien to the Church's structure, faith, and life. While trusteeism was suppressed more than a century ago, discontent with the clericalism that replaced it has been a staple of Catholic life in this country. Following the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s, that discontent found powerful expression through various organizations, mainly on the Catholic left. In the heady atmosphere inspired by "the spirit of the Council," the bishops in 1976 sponsored a "Call to Action" conference in Detroit that brought thousands of activists together who demanded power sharing and democratization in church government, the abandonment of priestly celibacy, and steps toward the ordination of women and approval of homosexuality. Detroit was a debacle. The bishops were understandably alarmed and resolved never again to provide such a forum for the unleashing of lay discontents. Some bishops now fear that they inadvertently violated that resolve by creating the National Review Board. They are, I am convinced, wrong again.

A vestigial organization called Call to Action, claiming some 20,000 members, is still with us. Nobody seems to pay it much mind. Not so with Voice of the Faithful (VOF), which has received a great deal of media attention since the first Boston exposures. It should be said in fairness that some leaders in some places around the country wanted VOF to be something other than Call to Action by another name. As is evident by its media pandering, its diocesan agitations, and the rostrum of speakers at its regional and national gatherings, however, VOF quickly became but another instrument of the weary old litany of dissent that first alarmed the bishops at Detroit. There seem to be, riding under whatever organizational banner, about thirty to forty thousand Catholics in the U.S., out of about sixty-three million, who can be rallied to the dream of a different church "come the revolution"—the revolution in question being their construal of the Second Vatican Council. The most important continuing institution linking this tattered band is the *National Catholic Reporter* (NCR), a weekly newspaper published in Kansas City. These are the NCR Catholics. There is still a small handful of bishops who think NCR Catholics are the wave of the future, but most bishops see them as a past that must be kept safely past. Unfortunately, some bishops—and not only those closely tied to business as usual at the bishops conference—may view the analysis and recommendations of the National Review Board as being on a continuum that runs from nineteenth-century trusteeism to Detroit 1976 to the latest splenetic eruption in NCR. That would be, I am convinced, a grave mistake.

Something Very Different

The NRB and its report are something very different. The NRB is not against the bishops; it is for the bishops. It does not dissent from church teaching; it wants to see that teaching taught and lived. It does not contest but affirms the Church's divinely constituted structure, and wants that structure to more effectively serve the faithful for whom it exists. The members of the NRB are not chronic church activists. They are men and women of great accomplishment in the world who, at the price of deep personal and professional sacrifice, agreed to help the Church they love in her time of need. They did not need or want this job but they were willing to serve, and what they have accomplished since the June 2002 meeting in Dallas is impressive indeed. Through formal interviews and in-depth conversations, they have discussed the crisis with hundreds of bishops, priests, victims, perpetrators, lawyers, prosecutors, theologians, lay activists, seminarians, seminary rectors, and experts on sexual abuse. They spent thousands of hours in conversation and in reading pertinent books, official documents, and files, seeking out whatever information and wisdom might be relevant to what went wrong and what might be done about it. The Church in the United States is very much in their debt. (Incidentally, I do not retract my statement that one prominent pro-abortion member should not have been appointed to the board. But that appointment was the result of an entrenched habit by which bishops do not challenge the decisions of other bishops, which is one of the problems addressed by the NRB report.)

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I hesitate to single out members, but mention must be made of Anne Burke, a federal appellate judge in Chicago, who took over as Interim Board Chair after the unfortunate Frank Keating resigned. Keating, it will be remembered, is the former governor of Oklahoma who greatly embarrassed and almost torpedoed the NRB by misrepresenting its mandate and presenting himself as a kind of special prosecutor against the bishops, whom he publicly portrayed as being akin to the Mafia. For reasons of its own, the bishops conference declined to name Judge Burke as chairman, but she soldiered on with the awkward title of "Interim." At the February 27 news conference she offered a moving testimonial to the fidelity of the great majority of priests who labored under the shadow of scandal created by some of their criminal colleagues. There is also Dr. Paul McHugh, distinguished professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins, who supplied invaluable expertise on sundry forms of sexual deviance. Robert Bennett—yes, he's Bill's brother—is one of the top "power lawyers" of Washington and, as head of the research committee, he put his immense talents and the considerable resources of his law firm at the disposal of the NRB. Finally, William Burleigh, board chairman of a national communications company, made the NRB his full-time job, bringing to its deliberations a nonspecialized but deep knowledge of Catholic theology and history.

There are others of the twelve members of the board who could be mentioned, but my point is simply to indicate the high quality of intelligence and devotion that the board brought to its assigned task. Never in the history of Catholicism in this country has such a distinguished, capable, and devoted group of laypeople offered, at the behest of the bishops, such a comprehensive assessment of the Church's leadership. These last years are frequently called "the greatest crisis in the history of Catholicism in America." In the research and report of the NRB, we have a response appropriate to the crisis. Some members of the board will resign this June and new members will be appointed. It is possible that in the longer term the NRB will turn out to be the problem that I expected it to be in the beginning. But right now, by the grace of God, the NRB is pointing the way toward authentic Catholic reform and a restoration of trust in the Church's apostolic leadership. Right now, and in the months ahead, the great question is whether the bishops will accept and act upon the gift they have been given.

The initial and carefully choreographed response was not encouraging. An hour after the NRB news conference at the National Press Club on February 27, the USCCB held its own conference to respond. A big banner was put on display for the television cameras: "Promise to Protect/Pledge to Heal." That, I am told, is the slogan suggested to the USCCB by a New York public relations firm. Bishop Wilton Gregory, president of the USCCB, did most of the talking. It was, as it has been for the past two years, all about "the children, the children, the children." The NRB report is, to be sure, about children (more typically, about teenage boys), but it is mainly about the bishops, the bishops, the bishops. Among the messages of the report is that, if the bishops had been doing their job, we would not have had to worry about the children. Gregory graciously thanked the NRB for its work, saying, "Their efforts have helped keep us on an even keel during the storm through which we have been passing." If the Catholic Church has been on an even keel during the last few years, one must wonder what her floundering would look like.

Bishop Gregory spoke about "making our church institutions the safest of environments for children and young people," about "reaching out to victims," and about "keeping from ministry anyone who would harm the young." They are all imperative concerns, to be sure, but such statements do not address the question of who is chiefly responsible for what went wrong. The purple cover of the report notwithstanding, the tone of the USCCB response was more self-congratulatory than penitential. Most unfortunately, and in the only underlined passage in his prepared text, Bishop Gregory declared, "The terrible history recorded here today is history." With all due respect, that is precisely and glaringly wrong. It would be an unspeakable sadness were the USCCB, having successfully spinmeistered the hostile media, to deep-six the NRB report in its archives where future scholars may examine it as a historical curiosity. One must pray that the initial response of the USCCB is not the final response. Otherwise, an unprecedented opportunity for reform will sink into the miasma of business as usual, the disillusionment of committed Catholics will deepen even further, and the legitimate concerns about the Church's leadership will again become the property of the usual agitators who will, as usual, exploit them for purposes dubiously Catholic. Bishops who understand that the crisis of sex abuse is a manifestation of a larger crisis of leadership—and there are bishops who do understand that—must keep the NRB report from being put to death with a gracious thank-you and then buried in the archives.

So far I have been speaking about the NRB report in the singular. In fact, there are two reports. One is a study commissioned by the NRB and carried out by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York. It consists of findings about the number of sex abuse incidents, the number of offenders, the nature of inci-

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dents, and so forth. The John Jay report is valuable in helping to set the record straight, although, because of limitations of methodology and records, it leaves some important questions unanswered or only partially answered. We turn now to the John Jay report and will come back later to the report produced by the NRB itself, the latter being of much greater potential significance for the future of Catholicism in America.

Missing the Point

The NRB and others make a point of noting that no other major institution in America that regularly works with children and young people has submitted itself to the kind of scrutiny that has been applied to the Catholic Church. One can imagine what the National Education Association would say to the demand that sexual abuse by public school teachers be subjected to a similar scrutiny. Comparisons with other religious groups, with organizations such as the Boy Scouts, with social workers, or with athletic coaches simply are not possible because there are no studies comparable to the John Jay report. Some well-intended but misguided Catholics complain that the Church is being unfairly singled out, that the crisis is not so severe when compared to other institutions. But that is to miss the point. As we shall see, the John Jay data are also susceptible to less alarming interpretations, but that, too, is to miss the point. The Point to be kept firmly in mind is well stated in the NRB report:

> It is clear that the abuse of minors is not unique to the Church. However, given the moral stature of the Church, the role of priests and bishops in providing moral leadership within the Church, and the obligations of priests and bishops to foster the spiritual and moral development of children and young people, when sexual abuse of minors occurs in the Church it is particularly abhorrent. Thus Catholics take no solace from the fact that the sexual abuse of minors occurs outside the Church as well.

The John Jay study is comprehensive, albeit not exhaustive. The researchers received the cooperation of 98 percent of the dioceses and eparchies (the latter being Eastern Rite jurisdictions) and of the religious orders that include 80 percent of order priests (about a third of all priests in the U.S. are in religious orders such as the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Benedictines). The headlines following the February 27 release of the reports declared that four percent of all the priests who had served during more than half a century, from 1950 to 2002, had been accused of sexually abusing a minor. A few headlines said that homosexual priests were at the heart of the scandals. In those fifty-plus years, there were 10,667 reported minor victims of clergy sex abuse. Eighty-one percent of them were male. There is some expressed unhappiness that the John Jay report uses the category of ages 11 to 17 rather than 13 to 17. According to some criminal justice and psychological authorities, the latter bracket more accurately draws the line at pubescence and thus makes clearer the distinction between pedophilia and adult men having sex with teenage boys. In its report and its February 27 presentation, the John Jay team was manifestly nervous about the homosexuality factor. The woman making the slide presentation at the National Press Club skipped over the data on adolescent males in a nanosecond. A perhaps jaundiced network reporter remarked afterwards about the downplaying of the homosexuality factor, "Remember that the John Jay people have to go back and get along in New York City."

The incidence of reported abuse increased significantly in the 1960s, peaked in the '70s, and then decreased in the '80s and '90s even more dramatically than it had increased during the prior two decades. During the entire period studied, 4.3 percent of diocesan priests were accused but only 2.7 percent of priests in religious orders. Different explanations of the difference are on offer. One is that order priests generally live in community and keep a closer eye on one another, thus ensuring chaste celibacy. A less edifying explanation is that homosexual priests in the orders have easier sexual access to other priests in the order and less access to teenage boys.

Of the more than four thousand priests accused of abusing minors, more than half (56 percent) had only one allegation against them. Three percent had ten or more allegations. These 149 priests accounted for almost three thousand (27 percent) of the allegations. Of the 109,694 priests in active ministry during these 52 years, 149 or .14 percent fit the public depiction of the predator priest sexually abusing young people. Moreover, the John Jay report says that 10 percent of all alleged incidents of abuse were found to be "not substantiated," while another 20 percent were brought against deceased, debilitated, or otherwise inactive priests and could not be investigated. Although it is admitted by all that some figures are less than precise, it is more than possible that well over half of all alleged incidents involved fewer than two hundred priests in a fifty-two-year period. Some may take it as a comfort that relatively so few priests and bishops violated their vows and abused minors, mainly teenage boys, over such a long time, but, if so, they should read again The Point set forth by the NRB above. The John Jay report notes that the proportion of victims who were male

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increased in the 1960s and reached 86 percent in the '70s, remaining there through the 1980s. In a footnote, the NRB report responds to the frequent obscuring of the homosexual factor by reference to "ephebophilia." The authors write, "The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association* (IV) does not recognize 'ephebophilia' as a distinct disorder. Ephebophilia is thus not a disorder in the technical sense, but rather a newly coined descriptive term for homosexual attraction to adolescent males."

There is another study that falls under the mandate of the NRB and may or may not get done, depending in significant part on the availability of an estimated four or five million dollars. The Johns Hopkins psychiatrist and NRB member Paul McHugh underscores that "the record of the abuse has this epidemic or 'outbreak' character rather than one suggesting an ever-present abusive proclivity in Catholic priests. John Jay, by extending its enumeration further back in time (to 1950), could show that the Catholic clergy of the 1950s was comparatively free of predators." He writes, "Roman Catholic priests were the agents of a huge and unprecedented behavioral epidemic of homosexual predation upon young males, many under their pastoral care, that went relatively unrecognized through the 1970s and 1980s. The epidemic appears to be abating—for reasons as inexplicable as those of its onset—even as concern for the discovery and treatment of individual victims continues." The study of the causes and context of the epidemic would include, for instance, the vulnerability of victims, the traits of predators, and contributing factors in the ecclesiastical and surrounding cultures. McHugh says, "We must encourage [the bishops] to press bravely ahead—despite their natural shame over this matter—with what is the first systematic study of sexual abuse of minors in public health history."

A Different Perspective

While appreciative of the John Jay research, Philip Jenkins of Pennsylvania State University and author of *The New Anti-Catholicism* believes the findings should be treated with caution. Many reported abuses are based on "weak or shaky evidence." "Investigators are counting all charges 'not withdrawn or known to be false,' and total exoneration is a very high standard." He notes that one-third of all accusations surfaced in 2002-2003, when priestly misdeeds were in the headlines almost every day. "The great majority of accusers," he writes, "are unquestionably sincere souls who have been deeply traumatized by their awful experiences, but a minority of accusers are blatantly in it for the money. These are the entrepreneurs who wait until after Father X dies to allege that he fondled them thirty years ago, an impossible charge either to verify or contest." Fifteen years ago, when there was a nationwide hysteria about childcare centers, "they would have been denouncing Satanic covens rather than priests." Victim-advocacy organizations claim that John Jay's four percent figure for abusers is too low, that it frequently takes years for accusers to come forward and therefore there are many more accusations in the pipeline. Jenkins is skeptical, noting that victim organizations have an interest in hype. One such organization, The Linkup, estimates that there at least 601,600 direct victims, and as many as 9,475,200 "indirect victims," adding up to 10,076,800 people abused by priests. Such nightmarish fantasies, in Jenkins' view, are woven out of whole cloth.

Referring to the aforementioned 149 rogue priests, Jenkins writes, "The real problem was an extremely small core of highly persistent pedophiles who massively 'over-produced' criminal behavior—men like John Geoghan and James Porter." Some of these serial molesters produced hundreds of plausible complaints. The relatively few men who really were predatory pedophiles, and not homosexuals abusing teenage boys, vastly inflate the reported number of very young victims. Further, given that the majority of accused priests have only one complaint against them, Jenkins says "it seems that most dioceses were doing a surprisingly good job coping with reports of misbehavior, working as they did on the apparently correct assumption that once a complaint was received about a priest, he would not reoffend." That will likely strike most readers as altogether too sanguine. Drawing on the John Jay data, Jenkins does offer a suggestive "profile" of the typical abusive priest. He was born about 1940 and ordained in the late 1960s, in time to be part of what one John Jay table shows as a "Himalayan peak" of reported abuse between 1975 and 1980, "an awful six-year period that produced one quarter of all recorded incidents for the whole fifty-two-year era under study." A full 10 percent of priests ordained in 1970 have been accused of abuse.

The Himalayan peak, Jenkins believes, has everything to do with the moral and doctrinal "chaos" following the Second Vatican Council. In addition, with thousands of men leaving the priesthood, bishops tolerated higher levels of misbehavior because they could not afford to lose more priests. Add to that the factor of a general culture that encourages "acting out" by, in the fine phrase of Pat Moynihan, defining deviancy down, and you get the high number of clergy abusers—although not nearly so high as many think and probably not quite so high as the John Jay report suggests.

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Jenkins is not alone in urging caution in dealing with the John Jay data, or at least with the way the data are being interpreted. No sooner were the John Jay findings released than the statistically minded went to work on what are claimed to be discrepancies. The John Jay researchers acknowledged that they were under the pressure of a deadline and that some of the numbers would need revisiting. A final, final report is promised soon. Among the alternative interpretations I have seen, one suggests that, given the number of Catholic children and the number of accusations during the period studied, one in 100,000 was abused by a Catholic cleric in 1950 and that is again the number for 2000. At the peak of the reported abuses, in 1980, six in 100,000 Catholic children were abused by clergy. These alternative readings tend toward lowering significantly the 4 percent figure for accused abusers. John Jay includes references to studies that estimate that 13.5 percent of all children are sexually abused by someone at some time during their childhood, and 62 percent of the victims might be expected to report the abuse. My hunch is that the 13.5 percent claim should be viewed with some skepticism, especially if abuse is defined as loosely as it was by the bishops at Dallas. As previously discussed here, that definition—which does not require physical contact, sexual intention, or even the perception of sexual intention—could make almost any adult an abuser and any child or adolescent a victim.

The discussion of the John Jay data will go on. I am not a statistician, and all this may seem like hairsplitting, but as one informed observer points out, these considerations are crucial to determining "whether there is a particular danger to children from Catholic clerics that is not found among other adult males who work with children. . . . [It] would appear that there is almost no comparable information by which to judge the severity and extent of the problem in either the Catholic Church or the larger society." Without similar studies of school districts, youth recreational leagues, other religious groups, and institutions serving significant numbers of children, it is hard to evaluate the incidence of clerical sex abuse of minors in the past or the present. Almost all studies indicate that the majority of sex abuse is by members of the family or relatives. And again, what we don't have is a basis for institutional comparison between the Catholic Church and other organizations dealing with children.

It may be objected that this discussion of the John Jay findings and their interpretation tends to minimize the severity of the sex abuse crisis in the Catholic Church. That is not true. Recall again The Point in the above-quoted passage from the NRB report. It is commonly said that, if even one priest or bishop has abused even one child or adolescent, that is a crisis. That is true. It is a crisis for the victim and should be for the perpetrator, but it is not an institutional crisis. If over half a century thousands of clergy have abused minors, even though the rate of abuse might be much lower than it is for cognate institutions, that is an institutional crisis. And it is a severe crisis if, as is indisputably the case, the leadership of the institution was complicit in the abuse by ignoring, denying, covering up, or facilitating the abuse. No matter how the numbers are crunched and recrunched, this is a Catholic crisis because it involves Catholic priests and bishops from whom the people have a right to expect better. Much better. As I have said before, given the rigorous measures that have been put into place since January 2002, the Catholic Church is today probably the country's safest institution for children and adolescents. But that does not answer the very big questions about what went wrong and what can be done to make sure it does not go wrong again.

What Is to Follow

To begin to get answers to those questions, we must momentarily set aside the number crunching and return to the report and recommendations of the National Review Board. The NRB has given the bishops a potentially historic opportunity to address problems that have, since long before the sex abuse scandal, undermined confidence in their leadership. The sex abuse crisis brought out into the open for all to see the problems that have created what the NRB calls the "Crisis in the Catholic Church in the United States." I attended the news conferences of February 27 and a reporter asked me whether that moment was a period or a comma or a semicolon in the story of Catholicism in America. If it is to be described in terms of a punctuation mark, I responded, I very much hope it is a colon. In other words, the great question is what follows from this moment in our Long Lent.

A bishop tells me that I'm wrong to worry that the episcopal conference will simply bury the NRB report. "It will be on the agenda for our June meeting," he tells me. "We will warmly thank the review board for its hard work, and maybe spend an hour or more in three-minute interventions on their report before moving on to the next item on the agenda. Only then will the NRB report be buried in the archives." He adds that a committee will no doubt be assigned the responsibility of studying the document further and bringing back its report in a year or two,

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by which time the agenda will be crowded with other matters clamoring for attention. The bishop smiled as he said this, but it was a wan smile, reflecting long experience with the ways of the USCCB and its bureaucracy. We must pray that he is wrong about the probable fate of the NRB report. There is reason to believe that he may be wrong. There is, for example, a serious move by some bishops to have the June meeting consider a proposal for convening something like an extraordinary synod of American bishops. Such an unprecedented synod could be the instrument for moving the bishops from the mode of public relations and institutional defensiveness toward the conversion called for by this Long Lent. A good start would be for the bishops to make the NRB report their own. It is not unreasonable to hope that such a decisive step could be the beginning of the Catholic Reform.

To be continued next month.

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BELIEVING IN EVOLUTION

The angry dogmatism of its defenders such as Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett suggests that Darwinism as a comprehensive explanatory system is on the ropes. That doesn't mean that the arguments will not go on and on. They will. There is too much at stake. The arguments are not, finally, over scientific evidence in fields such as evolutionary biology. They are about the nature of reality and our place in it. Dawkins declares that Darwinism makes it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist, and intellectual fulfillment, for an intellectual, is something like salvation. A good place to catch up on the state of the arguments to date is *Uncommon Dissent: Intellectuals Who Find Darwinism Unconvincing*, edited by William A. Dembski (ISI, 350 pp. $18 paper). Dembski has appeared in these pages and, along with Michael J. Behe, is credited (or blamed) for launching a school of thought that goes by the name of Intelligent Design.

In addition to Dembski and Behe, the book includes thirteen essays by a variety of scientists and philosophers who have been led to a position of skepticism toward, or outright rejection of, Darwinism. Of very particular interest is the essay "The Deniable Darwin" by mathematician and philosopher David Berlinski, which first appeared in *Commentary*. Berlinski offers a tour de force that is, variously, relentless in its logic, devastating in its studied understatement, and delightfully whimsical in exposing the incoherence of opposing arguments while never, unlike some of his opponents, being vicious. His essay and response to critics will come to be, I expect, a classic text in these debates.

Berlinski is assiduous in distancing himself from "creationists" or arguments claiming that manifest design logically requires a Designer. He contents himself with making the case that Darwinism is riddled with internal contradictions and simply does not explain what it claims to explain. While the more dogmatic proponents of Darwinist orthodoxy circle the wagons and fire imprecations at any and all who question the true faith, Berlinski does not accuse them of engaging in a conspiracy. "No conspiracy is required to explain the attachment of biologists to a doctrine that they find sustaining; all that is required is Freud's reminder that those in the grip of an illusion never recognize their affliction." As for the complexity of living systems, Berlinski says he entertains no "supernatural explanations." "The thing is a mystery, and if there is never to be a naturalistic explanation, I shall forever be content to keep on calling it a mystery." His purpose is limited to pointing out that Darwin's naturalistic explanation, turning on random variation and natural selection, is implausible, incoherent, and contrary to a great deal of scientific knowledge. Berlinski is especially effective in showing how Darwinists kick any idea of purpose, design, or teleology out the front door, only to smuggle such ideas in by the back door. Nature "selects" this or that, Nature "chooses," Nature "targets," and so forth. This Nature, whether upper or lower case, is a kind of deity in the details, ever invoked and ever denied.

One is sometimes asked whether one "believes in" evolution. More strident Darwinists adamantly insist that it is not a matter of faith; it is not a theory to be accepted or rejected; it is a fact to be acknowledged. But of course that is silly. It is precisely, and Darwin intended it precisely as, a theory to explain how the complexity of living systems came about. And there may be something to it in terms of micro-evolution, in possibly explaining how changes happen within particular species. As for macro-evolution—a general and all-encompassing explanation of how we and all other living things came to be—Darwinism is, in my considered judgment, preposterous. Berlinski is embraced by proponents of Intelligent Design for the persuasiveness and vigor of his arguments but also because he is an agnostic. It is odd but understandable that in our intellectual culture a critic of Darwinism is thought more credible if he is an agnostic or atheist. A scientist who believes in the

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Creator is suspected of cooking the evidence to support his belief. Whereas one who has made a commitment to agnosticism or, even better, atheism is thought to be neutral. This, too, is nonsense. There are devout and thoughtful Christians who accept Darwinism of one sort or another. The question before us is the evidence and proposed theories to explain the evidence. As the still-dominant theory—typically presented as a comprehensive belief system—Darwinism fails to explain too much that we know and claims to know much too much that we cannot know by reason and scientific evidence. As a belief system it suffers the distinct disability of being unbelievable. Of course there is much more to be said on these matters, and most of it is persuasively said in *Uncommon Dissent*.

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FROM COMMON CULTURE TO CULTURE WARS

It's a very big subject and one scholar cannot be expected to be on top of every aspect of it. Even if he were, one can only do so much in a little over 300 pages. Given these limitations, Patrick Allitt of Emory University has written a very impressive book, *Religion in America Since 1945: A History* (Columbia University Press, $30). What has been said about America must also be said about religion in America: It is so vast and various that almost anything said about it is amply supported by the evidence. Unlike too many historians, Allitt understands that the subject of America and the subject of religion in America are not two subjects but one. In this eventful half century—what half century is not eventful?—there was an uneasy peace after World War II, quickly replaced by communism and the Cold War, the extraordinary "religion boom" of the 1950s, the lure of "Eisenhower spirituality" and sundry positive thinkings, the essentially Christian civil rights movement, tumult over Vietnam, Catholicism's dubious "coming of age" in America, Jewish-Christian dialogue and the curious uses of the Holocaust, feminist theology, the clash over abortion, the emergence of the "new religious right," environmental piety, megachurches, millennial expectations, and the challenge of homosexuality.

Those and other developments carry Allitt's story up to September 11 and Ground Zero for America's understanding of itself and its place in the world. The story is strewn with names from the seemingly distant past and imperious present: Thomas Altizer, Norman Vincent Peale, John Cogley, Cesar Chavez, Otis Charles, Fawn Brodie, Paul Blanshard, Daniel Berrigan, James Forman, Mary Daly, John LaFarge, Charles Colson, and many more. Writing from the perspective of the liberal Protestantism that was once the mainline, Allitt is fair-minded in treating the many religious, cultural, and political changes that have driven that mainline world to something like the sideline. Allitt ends by wondering why, fifty years later, there are no theologians of great public consequence. Of course there are "public intellectuals," some of whom are explicitly Christian, but he has in mind towering cultural figures such as Reinhold Niebuhr or Paul Tillich.

The absence of such figures, I would suggest, is not so puzzling. Among many factors are these: the media-assisted suicide of the religious mainline/oldline; the establishment culture's loss of its defining "other" in Catholicism and fundamentalism; the emergence and astonishing success of Jewish thinkers in the academy and public culture; fundamentalism's makeover into a perceived political enemy as "the religious right"; the balkanization of a common culture under the force of sundry multiculturalisms and radical pluralisms; the multiplication of information and entertainment sources such as the Internet and hundreds of cable channels.

It is not true that—as some champions of deviant subcultures contend—there is no longer such a thing as an American culture and that there is only a smorgasbord of subcultures. But it is true that deviancy has been defined down, and in some cases out of existence, making the common culture much thinner. There was a time when the center seemed to hold. Everyone was expected to be aware of what was said in *Life*, *Time*, and on the "Jack Benny Show," and it was well known that the World Series of "our national sport" brought us together, even as we good-naturedly rooted for opposing teams. There was something like a civil religion as celebrated in, for instance, the heroic four chaplains (two Protestant, one Catholic, one Jew) who went down with the *Dorchester* in 1943. This was the America depicted in Will Herberg's 1955 classic *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*. The religio-cultural triumvirate was given powerful popular expression in the preaching and writings of the Rev. Norman Vincent Peale, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, and Rabbi Joshua Liebman. All of that was a very long time ago.

I expect that there are today theologians speaking to public questions who might be at least as profound and articulate as were Niebuhr or Tillich. But if Niebuhrs or Tillichs appeared today, what national

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venues would be available to them? Union Theological Seminary in New York or a conference of the fragmented and declining United Church of Christ? No such figure has emerged from, say, the large and vibrant Southern Baptist Convention, which no doubt has to do with what Mark Noll calls "the scandal of the evangelical mind," but also with the fact that the dominant media and academic world view the SBC as the cultural and political enemy. The last time a much-diminished *Time* celebrated a theologian was two years ago, and the theologian was Stanley Hauerwas, the scourge of the common culture that Niebuhr and Tillich sought to serve.

The common culture is now much thinner and, it seems, becoming thinner every day. It has in large part been displaced by what are aptly called the culture wars. There are distinguished religious thinkers who think of themselves as not being captive to the culture wars, who aspire to provide a nonpartisan theological perspective on the American experience. But their more partisan friends and enemies will not let them. Whether it is assigned by friends or enemies, they have a definite place on the battlefront of the culture wars. To the reluctant the question is insistently posed, "Whose side are you on?" They must answer the question, or it will be answered for them. This is not the happiest of circumstances for the public square, or for religion in the public square. But it is where we have come and Patrick Allitt's *Religion in America Since 1945* helps to explain how we came to where we are.

Nobody should want culture wars. As for myself, I am keenly aware that I am viewed as a belligerent, by both friends and enemies, and therefore I undoubtedly am. But my allies and I did not initiate hostilities. We did not, to cite but a few obvious examples, declare an unlimited abortion license, or advocate the deconstruction of Western culture, or champion the replacement of marriage with state-certified friendships. We are playing defense, albeit an aggressive defense, in a reasoned hope of prevailing. Prevailing so to speak, for the wise know that, short of the coming of the Kingdom, history is continuing contention. Much better than culture wars, however, is the idea of democratic engagement that Father John Courtney Murray described as a people "locked in civil argument." While accepting our part in battles not of our choosing, we must never sacrifice hope for genuine argument within the bond of civility. Please God, the realization of that hope may be the history of the next half century of religion in America.

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ David Horowitz is pressing a proposal that has thrown many academics into a tizzy. He wants universities to adopt an Academic Bill of Rights that will assure, amidst a multitude of other diversities, "intellectual diversity." Everybody in the academy is fervently devoted to diversity, until you put "intellectual" in front of the word. The eminent and self-described sophist Stanley Fish does not like the Horowitz proposal one little bit. It is, he says, a "Trojan horse of a dark design" to infiltrate conservatives into positions of academic influence. On campuses, says Fish, the culture wars are being won by those who promote women's studies, Latino studies, African-American studies, postmodern studies, gay-lesbian-transgender studies, and the like. But their critics have won the war of public opinion, convincing Americans that "our colleges and universities are hotbeds (what is a 'hotbed' anyway?) of radicalism and pedagogical irresponsibility where dollars are wasted, nonsense is propagated, students are indoctrinated, religion is disrespected, and patriotism is scorned." Horowitz's Academic Bill of Rights, Fish declares, would inaugurate the oppressive rule of ideological "balance" when the only purpose of a university is "to seek the truth." It is hard to know what to make of Fish's protest. In other writings, he is scornfully dismissive of the idea that there is such a thing as "the truth." Maybe it is just that Fish likes the academy's domination by insouciant nihilisms and doesn't want to see that challenged. Of course Horowitz is a conservative and would like to see more people in the academy challenging the likes of Fish. His proposal is a very odd Trojan horse, however, since no secret is made of its intent. Stanley Fish, sophist that he is, is never happier than when people say it is hard to know what to make of what he says. As for the meaning of "hotbed," I trust that Professor Fish is not above resorting to a dictionary where it is defined as "a bed of soil heated by fermenting manure."

■ A release from Fortress Press: "Lathrop and Wengert Reveal Christian Tradition as a Resource for the Modern Church." The release announces a new book by Lutheran theologians Gordon Lathrop and Timothy Wengert on the "marks" of the true Church. "Revealing" the tradition is a theologically intriguing idea, but suggesting that two millennia of history might be pertinent to Christianity today is downright revolutionary.

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■ Richard J. Mouw and I have been friends since we were both young and irresponsible. He is now president of Fuller Theological Seminary in California and recently raised a good many hackles with an article in the very leftward magazine *Sojourners*. The article is adapted from a talk he gave to the Covenant Network of Presbyterians, an organization sympathetic to the gay agenda and working to avoid a split in the Presbyterian Church-USA (PCUSA) over sex-related disputes. The experience of Reformed (Calvinist) theology in this country, says Mouw, is one of the orthodox breaking away to form a purer church, followed by further splits in the service of yet greater theological purity. He's right about that. He's also right in saying that it's wrong for some Presbyterians to deride those who dispute the gay agenda as homophobes. "My views on same-sex relations are very traditional," he writes. "I am convinced that genital intimacy between persons of the same gender is not compatible with God's creating or redeeming purposes." He then makes a plea for "sexual humility," pointing out that nobody is untouched, in desire or deed, by sexual quirks and transgressions. What he wants to happen is "that we take up our arguments about the issues that divide only after we have knelt and laid our individual and collective burdens of sin at the foot of the cross." That is well put, and when the arguments are taken up again and PCUSA comes to officially teach that genital intimacy between persons of the same gender is compatible with God's creating and redeeming purposes, and to bless same-sex marriages, and to ordain LGBTs, will Richard Mouw be left kneeling, confessing his sins of homophobia? The confession of sins in general does not answer the question of what are sins in the particular. Because he is a man of integrity, I do not expect that Richard Mouw will submit to a solemn assembly's approval of what he is convinced is incompatible with God's purposes. And I very much doubt that he is prepared to make a theological case for sacrificing truth in order to ensure the institutional survival of PCUSA. Then, too, there is a hope against hope: that having knelt at the foot of the cross, a repentant PCUSA may again name sin as sin, apart from which the meaning of forgiveness is made empty. I do not mean to pick on Richard Mouw or PCUSA. It is only that his talk has generated considerable interest. Many others in other denominations find themselves in a similar quandary. Who would have thought only a few decades ago that at the beginning of the twenty-first century the deepest fissures in these communions would appear along the lines of conflicting positions on homosexuality?

■ Mary Ann Glendon of Harvard Law School has been named to head the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. It's a part-time position that will keep her oscillating between Rome and Cambridge. The *Boston Globe* quotes her colleague at Harvard, Alan Dershowitz: "If a woman could be made pope, she'd be my candidate. She brings to bear all the best of religion and secular thinking. Whenever I get upset about religion, which happens from time to time, I think about Mary Ann Glendon and I remember the virtues of a religious perspective." Then, because papers must be balanced, the *Globe* talked to an old reliable from the superannuated left. "But the Rev. Richard McBrien, a Notre Dame theologian, compared Glendon's selection to that of Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court. Glendon's views, he said, are also extreme and out of step with the constituency she is supposed to represent. 'Catholic women who know her would not see her as one of their own and would not see her as evidence of the Vatican's commitment to place women in high positions of visibility,' McBrien said." It is true that some blacks have presumed to decertify Clarence Thomas as a black man, but at least they are black. Perhaps Father McBrien has canvassed all the Catholic women who know Professor Glendon and has been appointed their spokesperson, but I rather doubt it. Better, I think, for women to speak for themselves, although not about who is and who is not a woman.

■ I hear from readers who wonder why there are fewer comments in this space on the distortions, falsehoods, and general inanition of the *New York Times*. Frankly, it is because the *Times* is increasingly tedious and I spend less and less time with it. It has long been a liberal paper, of course, but in recent years it has become increasingly strident and unprofessional in its leftwing advocacy. Picking out this item or that for criticism seems unsportsmanlike, like shooting fish in a barrel. One increasingly looks at the *Times* in the way one looks at the *Village Voice* or the *Nation*, just to see what the left is up to. But old habits die hard, and I do look at the *Times* almost every morning. And from time to time, one comes across something worthy of comment. For instance, a while back there was a long editorial titled "Frank Talk About Abortion." It is now generally recognized that the pro-abortion advocates are on the defensive, and this had the appearance of an editorial reassessment of the question. It was unusual in that it took up the entire space for editorials. The editors begin with some grave chin-pulling about the "unfortunate consequences" of recent turns in the abortion debate. "Among the most disheartening is the widespread impression that the pro-choice movement does not regard abortion as a

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serious matter, and that women seeking to terminate a pregnancy require a condescending reminder from Congress to understand that the fetus they are carrying is a potential life." Hope is sparked by an editorial subtitle, "Finding Common Ground." Aha, one thinks, at last the pro-abortion forces, who have up to now been unwilling to give an inch, are open to an accommodation. "The wisest line," the editors write, "is the one laid down by the Supreme Court thirty years ago in *Roe v. Wade*: Government should have the right to step in only when the fetus has developed fully enough to be able to exist on its own." So, the *Times* is ready to support the legal protection of the unborn after the point of viability? Well, not quite. The editorial is occasioned by, and strongly opposed to, the partial birth abortion ban. In other words, the government does not have the right to step in even to protect a healthy baby who is being killed in the very process of leaving the birth canal. The editors' only other specific proposal in the service of "finding common ground" is that government should promote "effective sex education and easier access to contraception, including over-the-counter availability of the so-called morning-after pill." Did I, in a triumph of hope over experience, approach this editorial with the thought that maybe the *Times* would have something to say that did not insult the intelligence of its readers? Yes, I honestly did. Call me naïve, or call me charitable, I really am exceedingly reluctant to give up on the possibility of intelligent public discourse and respectful engagement with opposing arguments. And so, despite all, there may still be occasional references to the *Times* in this space.

■ A lot of people must do this or else those airport bookstores wouldn't survive. It was going to be a long flight and I took along some heavy-duty reading, but then I spotted *The Best American Short Stories of 2003* and decided to give myself a break. Don't buy it. Inclusivity of the ethnic-gender-racial-sexual kind obviously trumped the storytelling art in the editor's decisions about what to include. But there is an engaging tale by E. L. Doctorow about a disoriented gal, Karen, who steals somebody else's baby and then wants to return him to his parents. But how to do it without being charged with some terrible crime? Her boyfriend Lester comes up with the idea that she should go to confession and tell it to the priest, who can then return the baby. "'Lester,' she said, 'I don't know the right words for confessing.' 'It's OK,' I said, 'just go in there and sit down in that box they have. It is somewhere off to the side. You don't have to be Catholic for them to listen to you. . . . He will listen and never betray your trust that it is just between the two of you. And you don't have to cross yourself or anything, he will tell you what to do if you put it in the form of asking for his advice. And you will thank him, and you will mean it, and maybe thank God, too, that there are people who are sworn to do this for a living.'" And it all worked out just the way Lester said it would. Leaving one to wonder where Mr. Doctorow gets his ideas about current Catholic practices. Just as likely, the church would be closed, the box long ago discarded, and the best Karen would be able to do is make an appointment through the parish secretary to see Father next Tuesday, by which time both Karen and Lester would be in the slammer. For the rest of the flight, I went back to my heavy-duty reading, a book about vestigial Catholic influences in contemporary literature.

■ We have already given favorable notice to Russell Hittinger's *The First Grace: Rediscovering the Natural Law in a Post-Christian World* (see FT, April 2003), but the review by Graham McAleer of Loyola College in Maryland adds a point or two worth noting. Writing in *Pro Ecclesia*, McAleer says, "For Hittinger, the American Republic is a 'polity' riven by state sanctioned violence against the innocent [i.e. the unborn], which—although Hittinger stops *just* short of saying it—is Aquinas' definition of tyranny." I'm not sure that Hittinger does stop short. See, for instance, his contribution to the "End of Democracy?" symposium in the November 1996 issue of FT. The question is more one of what can and should be done in response to tyranny. McAleer recognizes that a great strength of Hittinger's approach is that it construes natural law in emphatically theological terms. Almost all Protestants, as well as many Catholics, are put off by natural law theory because it seems to be based on universalizing human capacities to which specifically Christian truth looks like an afterthought. Hittinger is solidly in the corner of John Paul II who, in the encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* and elsewhere, underscores a Christological understanding of natural law that entails the human response of the gift of self. And there is another important factor. McAleer writes: "One reason among many that the Hittinger volume is so good is that he treats natural law as, well, *law*. And Thomas insists that law requires promulgation. Many overlook this aspect of Thomas' theory. Whether one takes the John Finnis view that the norms of natural law are akin to something like Platonic forms, or one is willing to grant [as others do] that norms might yet change with evolution, Thomas' interest in promulgation is lost. All of these writers are going to have some explaining to do if Thomas is right that promulgation is essential to law. Promulgation does not appear essential on their views, and whilst this

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is not to say that they cannot introduce it, Hittinger has certainly exposed a shortcoming in their views." Is all this mere quibbling and definition-splitting among natural law theorists? Perhaps so, if the present masters of jurisprudence in the law schools and on the courts are in unchallengeable control. But Russell Hittinger and his natural law colleagues are, at the very least, keeping alive an understanding of the rule of the law that might slow and one day stop the course of lawless tyranny.

■ The story is told of a Donegal man who met a country woman walking over the hills with a little boy by her side, holding her hand. As an Irishman would, the man asks her who she is. She replies:"I am the mother of God, and this is Himself; and He's the boy you'll all be wanting at the last." That's from a reflection by Cahal Cardinal Daly, former Archbishop of Armagh, on the future of Irish Catholicism in a remarkable issue of the *Chesterton Review* devoted to "Chesterton's Ireland Then and Now." The special 300-page issue, which includes a number of Chesterton's commentaries on Ireland, comes out of a conference held at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, and has Chesterton scholars, journalists, and public figures trying to make sense of the apparent dissolution of what was once beyond cavil "Catholic Ireland." Among the more insightful essays is that of Garrett FitzGerald, former Taoiseach (Prime Minister), who traces the tumultuous history that resulted in the virtual equation of Ireland and Catholicism, to the severe detriment, as is now becoming evident, of both government and Church. The story is in many respects strikingly similar to the collapse of Catholic Quebec after the "quiet revolution" led by Pierre Trudeau and his colleagues, although, unlike the Irish instance, they were cheered on by priests and bishops who conflated "the spirit" of the Second Vatican Council with a desire for liberation from the Erastian captivity of the Church. "Chesterton's Ireland Then and Now" also looks to the future with a sometimes bracing and sometimes sagging hope against hope. The Irish still know, it is suggested, that He's the boy they'll all be wanting at the last. (The special issue sells for $25 but is free to those who subscribe for $30 per year. Write to the Editor, Rev. Ian Boyd, C.S.B., Seton Hall University, 400 South Orange Ave., South Orange, New Jersey 07079.)

■ David Burrell respects the force of the argument supporting Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis, and shares Huntington's appreciation of the religio-cultural sources of conflicts in international affairs. Yet he thinks Huntington must not be allowed the last word. Burrell's article in *Modern Theology*, "Thomas Aquinas and Islam," points to what the author thinks is a more promising form of engagement. "Ours is a very different world from Aquinas', yet his ability to see the presence of interlocutors from other faiths as a spur to understanding of his own tradition offers us a model which deftly eschews intellectual colonizing, and displays the way in which every living tradition grows by carefully responding to challenges from without. Yet what must animate that approach is a lively confidence in the truth of one's own tradition, together with the realization that such a truth will continue to outstrip any standing articulation of it. So one seeking the truth of matters revealed will always have something to learn from others; the polar opposite is to *need* certitude. Yet a proper phenomenology of a living religious faith will be able to identify needs of that sort as obstructions to the internal development of the faith itself, exposed so neatly in Kierkegaard's ridiculing of anyone intent on 'defending the faith.' We have explored in detail the appropriation which Aquinas made of a set of philosophical strategies transmitted to him by an Islamic rendition of a Neoplatonic text, the *Liber de causis* [*Kitab al Khair Mahd*], as he sought to articulate the faith assertion—central to Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike—of a free creator, in properly metaphysical terms as the 'cause of being.' The deft way in which he adapts this (already adapted) text of Proclus displays how he executed his calling to show that *theologia* could be *scientia*: not by reducing itself, Procrustean-fashion, into Hellenic categories, but by employing them in a way that respects their logical power yet allows them to illuminate, rather than pretend to explain, matters which will resist explanation in simply human terms. No wonder his synthesis of Christian doctrine, once shown to be the intercultural, interfaith achievement it is, has proven to be normative for subsequent generations as well." To the objection that this vision is more suitable for an academic seminar than the real world of Islamist terrorism against the West, Burrell notes that Aquinas, too, lived in a world besieged by Islam. It is especially in times of war, however just war may be, that we must not let war have the last word.

■ Out of the fundamentalism of the early twentieth century came, in the 1940s, the "neo-Evangelicals" who were determined to move from isolation to engagement, winning the culture for Christ. A half century later, the result is an amorphous coalition of "parachurch" movements kept in a state of spiritually adolescent excitements that are exploited by skilled entrepreneurs bent on building their own religious kingdoms. Such is the picture provided by D. G. Hart in *Deconstructing Evangelicalism: Conservative Protestantism in the Age of Billy Graham* (Baker). He writes, "The

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National Association of Evangelicals tried but could not contain the gigantic puddle that evangelicalism had become—a mile wide and, depending on the consistency, maybe even less than an inch deep. Unfortunately for Evangelicals, scholars and church leaders continued to be impressed by the breadth of the lake but seemingly unconcerned about the movement's formlessness and shallowness. But if evangelicalism is going to mean anything more than liking Billy Graham, someone or something needs to channel the seepage into a culvert with adequate depth and firm banks." That culvert, Hart contends, is provided by the historic denominations that have a churchly tradition of theology, liturgy, and moral reflection. Hart addresses himself to scholars of American religion, urging them to give up their obsession with evangelicalism's fervors and return to giving serious attention to the traditions that anchor American religion, the traditions on which evangelicalism is largely parasitic. Although as a conservative Christian of the Calvinist persuasion, Hart would ordinarily be called an Evangelical, he argues that the term has long since outlived its usefulness. *Deconstructing Evangelicalism* is a lively polemic peppered with both humor and irascibility. It is a superior contribution to a rapidly growing literature by Evangelicals on evangelicalism's grave ecclesiological deficit. In 1992, Charles Colson published *The Body* (recently updated as *Being the Body*), and since then there has been no end of evangelical books pointing out that Jesus established not a coalition of spiritual enthusiasms but a Church. D. G. Hart's is a distinctively Reformed contribution to a debate that is still just getting underway.

■ It is no surprise coming from Christopher Hitchens, but that it is published on the opinion page of the *Wall Street Journal* is noteworthy. Of course a conservative paper, precisely because it is intelligently conservative, wants to engage opposing arguments. But Hitchens' article, "The Married State," has no argument whatsoever; it does not even purport to make an argument. He tells us that he has gay friends and knows about gay couples who live in a marriage-like relationship. So Christopher Hitchens wants it understood that he is not a homophobe. The announcement of that hardly seems to warrant valuable space on the *Journal*'s opinion page. Hitchens does not come right out and say that he favors same-sex marriage. What, then, is the point of the article? The one and only point of the article is that he thinks it speaks in favor of same-sex marriage that the idea really upsets religious believers. It is, he says, "nonsense on stilts to speak of [homosexuality] as an offense to any presumable Creator. . . . I know that our theocratic enemies are, and that our former totalitarian enemies were, ugly and paranoid on the point." "I like to picture the writhing faces and hoarse yells of the mullahs and fanatics [if America adopts same-sex marriage]." Much as Hitchens relished the discomfiture of her admirers when he wrote a vicious screed against that "sacred cow," Mother Teresa. So here is the *Wall Street Journal* giving a big chunk of space to Christopher Hitchens to put on the public record (once again) that he is not a homophobe and that he hates believers in "any presumable Creator." Perhaps the editors of the *Journal* simply wanted to display the vicious vacuity of Mr. Hitchens and others who believe that the fact that many Christians support a marriage amendment is a good reason to oppose it.

■ That intrepid Rome reporter John Allen recently sat down with Father Robert Taft of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, one of the foremost Vatican experts on East-West affairs. It seems that patience is wearing thin in some quarters. A big sticking point with the Moscow Patriarchate is that it refuses to recognize the millions of Greek Rite Catholics in Ukraine, those who are in communion with Rome. Allen asks whether we are ever going to persuade the Orthodox to change their minds. Taft: "No, and I don't think we should even try. To hell with Moscow." Would Fr. Taft care to say what he really thinks? Yes he would: "Basically, there are three groups in the Russian hierarchy. You've got a wacko kind of rightwing fringe. These are the ones who agree with calling Rasputin a saint and that kind of garbage. Then you've got people like Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk, who are open and ecumenical and intelligent, because he's got an education. Then you've got kind of a middle group that's very conservative but not frothing at the mouth. Kirill's group is a very small minority. The patriarch is a juggler trying to keep all these balls in the air." So, Allen asks, Taft is recommending tough love? Taft: "Absolutely. That was one of the problems of the Secretariat of Christian Unity [in the past]. When the Orthodox would say something outrageous, the Vatican would make remonstrances privately, but never in public. You can't do it that way. That makes them think they're getting away with it. It's got to be front page, in your face." According to reliable sources, Fr. Taft is not looking for another job. I expect there are those in Rome who are glad that somebody said out loud what they have been thinking for some time.

■ It is an interesting question, how or how much do you edit letters to the editor. Except for obvious typos, we tend to take a hands-off approach, but we do not print gross errors of fact. Apparently they have a different policy at the *Wall Street Journal*. Writing in opposition to an op-ed article by Mary Ann Glendon

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of Harvard that warned against judicial activism in imposing same-sex marriage, Evan Siegel of Evanston, Illinois, asks, "Does she believe the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* lacked legitimacy because it was decided by a mere 5-4 majority?" A telling point, except that, as any high school student should know, the *Brown* decision of 1954 was unanimous. I am undecided about whether it is more troubling that *Journal* editors did not know that or knew it and still printed Mr. Siegel's false statement. There is also the possibility that they know the decision was unanimous, they assume their readers know it as well, and they simply wanted to show how ill-informed are the critics of Professor Glendon. Except that Mr. Siegel is a reader and it seems just possible that there are many others like him. In any event, it would definitely not be nice to publish letters in order to display the ignorance of their writers. Fortunately, given our readership, we seldom have to deal with such questions.

■ I would guess that most people don't think much, and don't want to think much, about homosexuals, what they do in bed, and how they live. This is possibly offensive to gays who want to be thought about, noticed, and, as it is said, taken seriously. Most people want the same. A complication is that heterosexuals do not want to be viewed as knowing much about homosexuality, lest their too-much-knowing be deemed suspect. "You know so much about gays and their lifestyle." Followed by an unspoken, "What is it with you?" This leaves people who are opposed to, say, gay marriage at a distinct disadvantage, having conceded that gays are the experts on all things related to homosexuality. Enter *Getting It Straight: What the Research Shows about Homosexuality*, recently published by the Family Research Council. The special usefulness of this 144-page book is that it confines itself to what the experts say, citing, usually without comment, the pertinent texts from the most prestigious academic journals on the causes of homosexuality, practices of the gay world, health risks attending those practices, children raised by homosexuals, and the link between homosexuality and the sex abuse of minors. As debates about homosexuality heat up—in the public square and over the kitchen table—readers may want to have this valuable book at hand. It is available, for a five dollar contribution, from the Family Research Council, 801 G Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20001.

■ Not to worry about all those people who say they believe in Jesus. Adam Kirsch, writing in the *New York Sun*, reviews Richard Wightman Fox's *Jesus in America: A History*. Says Mr. Kirsch, "If the omnipresence of Jesus in our ostensibly secular country is troubling, his malleability is reassuring: Americans seem less eager to do Jesus' bidding than to have him do theirs." Oh well, that's all right then.

■ A San Francisco rabbi says that same-sex marriage is consistent with "Jewish history in a way that is radical and yet also very traditional." Don't ask, he can't tell. The influential Israeli journalist Hillel Halkin is not amused at the way in which American Jews are rallying to the cause of same-sex marriage. Of Israelis, he writes, "It makes about as much sense to them to say that homosexuals should be granted marriage licenses in the name of human equality as it would make sense to say that it is discriminatory to withhold driver's licenses from people who can't drive." The result is a great and growing "Jewish Divide" between Israeli and American Jews. Israelis see the Bush administration "as the most sympathetic to them ever to hold power in Washington, while American Jews view it as a menace to liberal social values." In taking the wrong side in an American *Kulturkampf*, says Halkin, "American Jews seem already to have crossed the Rubicon."

■ Just as Germans have been congratulating themselves upon at last becoming a "normal" society, there was that unsettling incident of the fellow who advertised for men who wanted to have sex, after which it was understood that they would be killed and eaten. He had over a period of weeks consumed forty pounds of one volunteer before he was arrested. According to his testimony, they had together enjoyed an appetizer of his guest's sliced and sautéed penis before he did him in. The courts were in something of a quandary about the charges to be brought since it was, after all, consensual. He was finally sentenced to five years and will actually spend some time in jail. "There are standards that must be upheld," said a prosecutor. Meanwhile, in Frankfurt, Dr. Gunther von Hagens' dead body museum continues to be enormously popular. He artistically exhibits human cadavers, whole and artfully arranged in cross sections. In February, however, there was a public flap when it was charged that some of his cadavers were purchased from China and had holes in the back of their skulls. In China, the condemned are forced to kneel and are then dispatched with a bullet in the back of the head. In response to the charges, Dr. Hagens said, "The likelihood is very slim, but I cannot rule it out. After all, it is possible that you have a corpse in your cellar and do not know it." On a happier note, he says that at first he worried that the charges might hurt attendance at his lucrative museum. "Some people might say, 'That's a scandal,' but in the long run it won't matter." According to the newspaper account,

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"On a recent afternoon, visitors seemed so distracted by the cadavers—sliced, diced, some clutching their internal organs in their hands—that no one bothered to ask where the bodies had come from." We are a wonderfully resilient species. In the long run, you can count on people to get used to anything.

■ As a folksinger once sang, "How many roads must an individual walk down before you can call them an adult?" Well, that's not *exactly* the line from Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind," but it gets the job done and avoids offending the excruciatingly sensitive. A couple of years ago, the New York State Education Department became a laughingstock when it was revealed they had bowdlerized even classics such as Mark Twain, Franz Kafka, and Walt Whitman to remove potentially offensive words from textbooks. Candace de Russy, a trustee of the State University, investigated and found out that the censors had a definite policy: "We may not always understand why a certain word hurts. We don't have to. It is enough that someone says, 'That language doesn't respect me.' That is, if any word or phrase is likely to give offense, no matter how far-fetched, it should be deleted." Among excisions are any reference to a person's age, ancestry, disability, ethnicity, nationality, physical appearance, race, religion, sex, or sexual proclivities. Also to be replaced: "grandfather clause," "ghetto," "alumna," "alumni," "alumnus," "white collar," "blue collar," "pink collar," "teenager," "senior citizen," "underprivileged," "unmarried," "widow," "widower," and, of course, "man." One oddity here is that some of those terms, such as "underprivileged" and "senior citizen," not so long ago entered the language in order to avoid hurting the feelings of, in these instances, the poor and old. But it gets even odder, as explained by Diane Ravitch, author of *The Language Police*: "Thus the great irony of bias and sensitivity reviewing. It began with the hope of encouraging diversity, ensuring that our educational materials would include people of different experiences and social backgrounds. It has evolved into a bureaucratic system that removes all evidence of diversity and reduces everyone to interchangeable beings whose differences we must *not* learn about—making nonsense of literature and history along the way."

■ I am somewhat surprised by how many readers expressed surprise, and puzzlement, over my statement in the February issue that Christians and Jews and, *mutatis mutandis*, Muslims worship the same God. Think about it this way: Christians know that the God of Israel—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—is God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit definitively revealed in the first century Jew, Jesus the Christ. Although Christian tradition interprets the Old Testament by a trinitarian hermeneutic, we do not claim that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others in the Old Testament understood God as He is depicted in, for instance, the Nicene Creed. Does this mean they were worshiping another God? Of course not. Was the God of Abraham and Moses the God whom we worship as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Of course. Or is it that, as one reader argues, Jews who rejected the self-revelation of God in Jesus the Christ were no longer worshiping the God of Israel? That can hardly be squared with the New Testament evidence, especially Romans 9-11. Christians, Jews, and Muslims have a fundamental disagreement about the nature and actions of God. "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2). Jews deny the second part of that statement. Muslims say Jesus was a prophet but was superseded by the revelation given to Mohammed. But Christians, Jews, and Muslims agree that the God we are disagreeing about is the God of Abraham who spoke to our fathers by the prophets. Christians hold that Jews and Muslims are not worshiping God rightly—as the Father who revealed Himself in the Son and is understood by the guidance of the Spirit in Christ's body the Church. That Christian claim will, we believe, one day be vindicated when, as St. Paul says, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2). I hope these comments help clarify what it means to say that, despite all, we worship the same God.

■ Two new books on the abortion wars. *Bearing Right* by William Saletan of *Slate* argues that "conservatives" are winning, having blocked government funding for abortions and the freedom of teenagers to procure abortions without parental consent. Gary Rosen of *Commentary* points out, however, that the 70 percent supporting parental consent and 60 percent opposing government funding are a much higher portion of the population than either votes or identifies itself as conservative. The abortion movement is frustrated by a supermajority of the American people. The second book, *Beyond Choice* by Alexander Sanger, grandson of population-control champion Margaret Sanger, contends that the rallying cry of "pro-choice" should be replaced with "reproductive success," affirming abortion not as a "necessary evil" but a positive good. He allows that abortion kills human life, but this should be seen as a necessary good so that wanted human lives can better flourish. Mr. Rosen asks, "Can Sanger really believe that public opinion would shift

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his way if only abortion were repackaged as a Darwinian survival strategy?" Not likely, answers Mr. Rosen. The book "seems intended to sway not average citizens but activists, opinion-makers, and—most of all—judges and law professors." Since when have average citizens had a say in decisions about the legal protection of the unborn?

■ Muslims frequently complain that their critics do not take the trouble to understand them. David Twersky reviews Gabriel Schoenfeld's new book, *The Return of Anti-Semitism*, in the *New York Sun*, and commends the author for recognizing the problem of "a rising tide of Muslems emigrating to the West." "Muslem" appears four times in the review. Whether the fault is with Mr. Twersky or an editor, Muslims might justly complain that their critics should at least learn to spell their name right.

■ Jesus prays for his disciples "that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." The teaching of the Catholic Church, as insistently reiterated by John Paul II, is that she is "irrevocably" committed to the visible unity of all Christians in full eucharistic communion. I have written extensively about this commitment in these pages and elsewhere, and in a three-page blast the *New Oxford Review* attacks what I work and pray for as a "pipedream Church." "We fail to see the possibility, or even the desirability, of this," writes the editor. Ecumenism is a mirage and a shell game. As for non-Catholics, "There's no hope for orthodox Christians stranded in these denominations other than to return to Rome. There's no point in offering them a hallucinatory Church that will never be. . . . There will never be a one-world Church. The Catholic Church is, as ever, the closest thing to Christian unity we'll ever see." As for all Christians being one, the editor implicitly suggests that Jesus will just have to get over his "liberal utopian ecclesiology." As I and others have frequently noted, the full unity of all Christians may be an eschatological concept. It is God's work in which we can only trustingly participate. Certainly none of us can see the way to overcome the many obstacles to unity. It may require, as Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger has said, a new outpouring of the Spirit opening possibilities that do not now exist. But *NOR*'s repudiation of the goal of full communion among all Christians is both a striking rejection of magisterial teaching and an act of breathtaking presumption in answering the prayer of Our Lord in the negative. Of course, the prayer of Jesus is addressed not to *NOR* but to the Father, so the former's answer may be taken as less than decisive.

■ Two months ago I defended the inclusion of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) in the Alliance for Marriage (AFM), a broad coalition of organizations working to protect the definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman. The Islamic Society has since voluntarily withdrawn from AFM, lest the controversy generated by its participation become a distraction from the coalition's task. There is still Muslim participation, but it is mainly of the black American variety. I understand ISNA's decision, but I am inclined to regret it. There are now many Muslims from the Middle East living in this country. The low estimate is one million. Most of them are citizens or want to become citizens, and it is in our interest and theirs to cultivate their participation in our common life. As I said in the March issue, there may be only a few degrees of separation between most Muslim organizations and those that promote Islamist terrorism. Our purpose should be to increase the degrees of separation, and ISNA's part in AFM might have done that. There will be other opportunities.

■ Archbishop Raymond Burke was installed in St. Louis with the usual ritual splendors and courtesies. In his homily he said again what he had said to considerable effect in his former diocese of La Crosse, Wisconsin, that Catholics who knowingly, publicly, and persistently defy the Church's teaching on abortion and related questions should not present themselves for Communion. Bishop G. Wayne Smith of the Episcopal Church was there and afterwards told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "Burke really tried to persuade people with his moral teaching but he will find that Missourians don't take kindly to being told what to think and what to do." Imagine that, a bishop who thinks his job is to teach people what to think and do. It does pique one's curiosity about Bishop Smith's understanding of his own job. On second thought, it may not be so different from what many Catholic bishops think their job is.

■ It is no little thing when one Sunday's church bulletin can reflect the innumerable wonders of renewal. A friend picked up the other day the bulletin of St. Francis Xavier Church, which is around the corner on West 16th Street. It includes the parish mission statement: "We, the Church of St. Francis Xavier, are a prophetic Roman Catholic community. . . ." Not any old Roman Catholic Church, mind you, but a community, and a prophetic one at that. It goes on to say that "Jesus Christ is recognized as Companion in our journey and made present by. . . ." Then follow all the wonderful things the community is and does

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to make its Companion present. I used to dislike the old language about the priest "confecting" the presence of Christ in the Mass. In English, the word puts the focus on what the priest is doing rather than on what Christ is doing. But that is nothing compared to the amazing people of St. Francis Xavier who confect the presence of the Companion by being their own deliriously wonderful selves—"we commit ourselves to the spirit of inclusion and collaboration," "[we are] a community where injustice in all its forms is challenged, where the alienated and the marginalized find a home," and so forth. True, it is all about them, but then they really are very, very good people. They are even, it appears, bringing about the Second Coming. The mission statement concludes: "Standing together as a people of hope, we seek to realize the Reign of God." Forget what the Companion said about nobody knowing the day or the hour. The days and hours are clearly posted at St. Francis Xavier. On the second Friday of the month is the meeting of "Catholic Lesbians." "Gay and Lesbian Catholics" is scheduled for the first and third Fridays. (I suppose one has to go to the meetings to discover the difference between Catholic Lesbians and Lesbian Catholics.) For some reason no time is specified for "Love Makes a Family," a support group for gays and lesbians "dealing with family issues." But the first and third Wednesdays are for "Young Adult Gays and Lesbians." (Young being defined as 21-35, which seems somewhat discriminatory. Are the Jesuits at St. Francis neglecting teenagers?) The bulletin contains a reflection on the Companion's Sermon on the Mount, titled "Grace is Energizing." The conclusion: "'Be who you are,' Jesus is saying. 'Be the person you are created to be.' 'Be fully yourself. . . . Don't give away this power to be yourself, don't deny my grace to you. Instead, come home to yourselves.' It was quite a sermon, wasn't it?'" Right. No wonder they crucified him. Telling people how simply wonderful they are is not easy, but a prophetic community is marked by the courage to pander. There is also Bible study at St. Francis Xavier. A series is announced on the creation accounts in Genesis where people will be "discovering surprises and deep wisdom along the way." "For instance, did you know that the phrase describing Eve as Adam's 'helpmate' can more accurately be translated as 'someone to guide as his leader.'" No, I didn't know that, but then I studied Hebrew the old fashioned way. At St. Francis Xavier it's different: "We'll read the scriptural narrative in English and in the original Hebrew—no previous experience necessary!" That way there are a lot more surprises along the way.

■ Some might think we have expended our share of ink on Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, and at this point it seems that everything to be said about the film has been said. But, as I anticipated many months ago, this is much more than a film. The film and the responses to it are something of a cultural epiphany, and what we have learned is both heartening and depressing. I have a huge file of clippings on the subject and am ruminating on what needs saying. Surely not another fifty reasons on why it is not anti-Semitic or on the difference between unspeakable brutality and egregious violence. The difference between reactions by Christian liberals and Christian conservatives needs closer examination, as also the difference between evangelical Protestant and Catholic responses. And why is it that so many think Pontius Pilate is treated sympathetically, rather than as a craven coward who killed an innocent man to save his own skin? This seems obvious: The most important difference between those who hate and those who love the film is whether they do or do not believe that they are watching a depiction of the suffering and death of their Lord and Savior. But more on all this next month, along with an insightful reflection on these questions by Kenneth Woodward of *Newsweek*. Meanwhile, I know I'll be going to see at least one more time *The Passion of the Christ*.

■ When David B. Hart is on a roll, there is no stopping him. In the March issue of *The New Criterion* he offers an extended and scintillating overview of contemporary religion, culture, and civilization in America. (On the last he doesn't have much to say because he doesn't think there is much of it.) Most of the analysis will be familiar to our readers from what he and others have written in these pages. As you might expect, I'm in substantial agreement with the assessment he provides, although I think he exaggerates the importance of the "charismatic" in the present and future vitality of Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism. I have frequently cautioned against the propensity of some conservatives, especially Evangelicals, to claim that ours is a post-Christian society. That is, I contend, an easy out from engaging the tasks that are ours in an incorrigibly, confusedly, and conflictedly Christian America. Hart sets out another consideration to which we should attend: "For, if we succumb to post-Christian modernity, and the limits of its vision, what then? Most of us will surrender to a passive decay of will and aspiration, perhaps, find fewer reasons to resist as government insinuates itself into the little liberties of the family, continue to seek out hitherto unsuspected insensitivities to denounce and prejudices to extirpate, allow

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morality to give way to sentimentality; the impetuous among us will attempt to enjoy Balzac, or take up herb gardening, or discover 'issues'; a few dilettantish amoralists will ascertain that everything is permitted and dabble in bestiality or cannibalism; the rest of us will mostly watch television; crime rates will rise more steeply and birthrates fall more precipitously; being the 'last men,' we shall think ourselves at the end of history; an occasional sense of the pointlessness of it all will induce in us a certain morose feeling of impotence (but what can one do?); and, in short, we shall become Europeans (but without the vestiges of the old civilization ranged about us to soothe our despondency)." Hart acknowledges that he is not original in observing that "the vestigial Christianity of the old world presents one with the pathetic spectacle of shape without energy, while the quite robust Christianity of the new world often presents one with the disturbing spectacle of energy without shape." It is reasonable to believe that a more churchly and culture-forming shape of Christianity may be in process through efforts such as Evangelicals and Catholics Together and new Christian initiatives in philosophy, literature, and the arts. There are, to be sure, formidable obstacles but, if we resist the temptation to resign ourselves to ours being a post-Christian society, such initiatives could bear impressive fruit in the short term of the next hundred years or so. And in the long term, who knows what might happen?

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